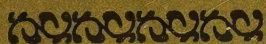


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KING DAVID
AN' THE
PHILISTINE
BOYS



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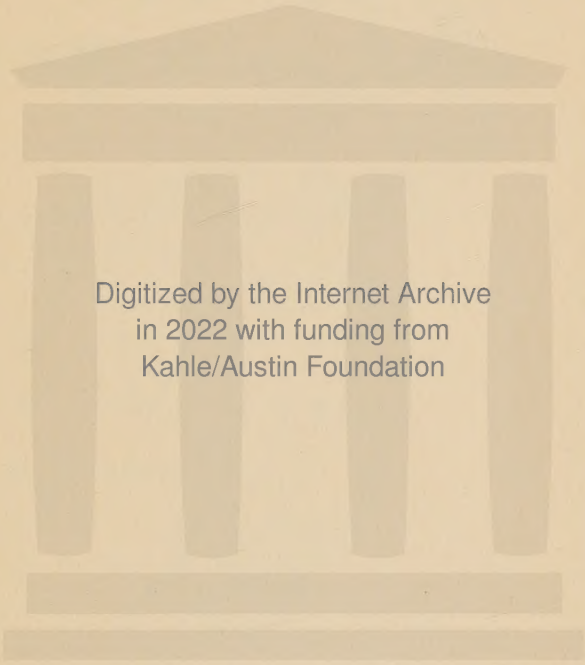
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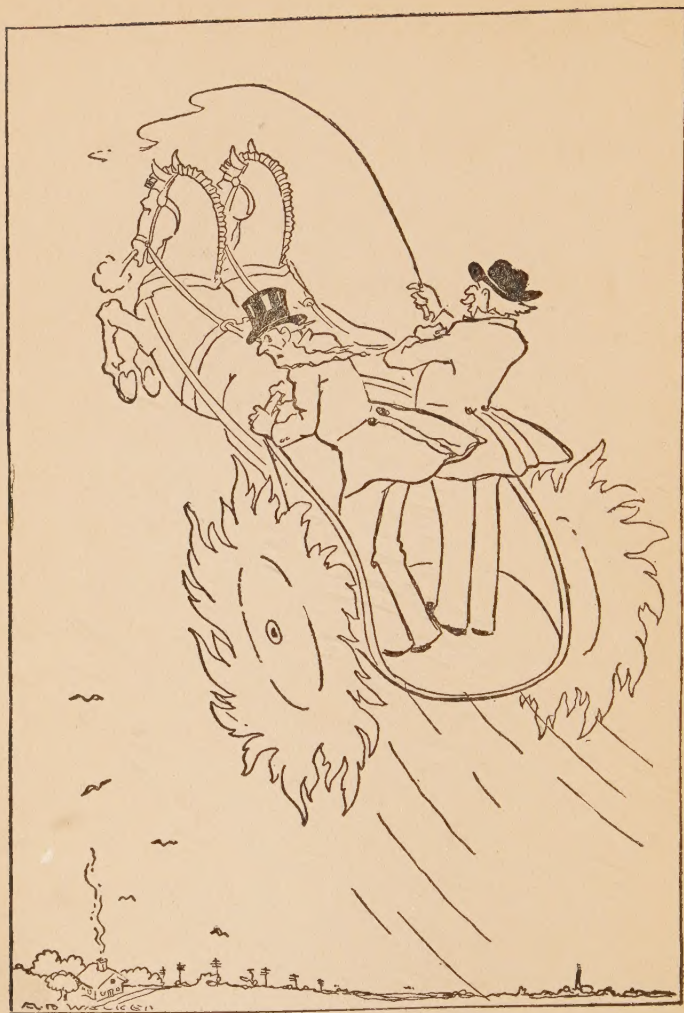
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THE PHILISTINE BOYS



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ELIJAH'S CHARIOT RIDE



OL' KING DAVID an' the Philistine Boys

BY
ROARK BRADFORD

WITH DRAWINGS BY
A. B. WALKER



HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK AND LONDON

1930

OL' KING DAVID AN' THE PHILISTINE BOYS
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OL' KING DAVID AN'
THE PHILISTINE BOYS



The Subtle Ways of the Lord

EFN de Lawd has ever yit made a mistake, well ain't nobody ever kitched him. A heap er times hit do look like he kind er bit off mo'n he kin chew, and a heap er times hit look like he got hisse'f way out on a limb. But dat's jest about de time when he's gittin' in his best licks.

'Cause de Lawd is a man which is got a haid on him as long as a mule and he knows what he's up to, all de time. He got ev'ything all planned out and he run dis yearth jest like he got her planned. When he made mankind outn de ashes and dust, he knowed what he was doin'. And when he flooded all de people out and saved ole Norah, well, dat wa'n't no accident. And when

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he picked out ole Abraham and his chillun for his own, well, dat was all jest a part er de plan.

"I lets my people grind dey own cawn," say de Lawd. "And sometimes dey wanders away f'm de mill whilst I ain't watchin'. But I kin always git 'em straightened out in time to git de meal home for de supper hoecakes."

"Hit look kind er like," say Gabriel, "dat dey done about got whar dey ain't got no cawn to grind. When you saved ole Norah f'm de flood, well, you didn't save much. You had to turn right around and mix 'em up at Babel. And quick as you got 'em mixed up, dey all went down to Egypt. And you knows good as me you had to pass miracles to git 'em outn Egypt. And quick as you got 'em outn Egypt, well, dey started gittin' messed up wid de Philistines. And you ain't never got 'em onmixed wid dem Philistines yit."

"Dey whapped de Philistines all over town," say de Lawd.

"Dey whapped 'em, yas," say Gabriel. "But dem Philistines won't stay whapped."

"Dat's what you think," say de Lawd. "But dat ain't de Philistines whoppin' my chilluns, now."

The Subtle Ways of the Lord

"Dey looks like Philistines," say Gabriel. "And dey ack like Philistines. And I be doggone efn I didn't think dey was Philistines."

"Dat's de way hit looks to you?" say de Lawd.

"Hit do, for a fack," say Gabriel.

"Well," say de Lawd, "dat's how come you's runnin' round up hyar wid a hawn in yo' hand, instid er' tendin' de gate or keepin' de sin book, or doin' somethin' which needs brains."

"Well," say Gabriel, "efn dey ain't Philistines whuppin' yo' chillun, well who is dey?"

"Dey's me," say de Lawd. "Verily I say unto you, spare de rod and you spiles de chile. And hit's gettin' too many er dem chilluns to take out behind de house and bresh 'em down wid a cane. So when I ketch 'em sinnin' and runnin' around at nights, well, I jest rounds up de Philistines and sick 'em at my chilluns, and whups 'em all at once."

Well, Gabriel wan't de kind er man to argy back at de Lawd, but some way or yuther de word got passed around de store dat de Lawd's chilluns was gittin' whupped pyorely by de Philistines, and dat de Lawd was round, jest makin' tawk like it was him, jest to keep de fo'ks

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f'm knowin' how things stood. So de Lawd hyared de tawk, and he didn't say a word. He jest went up to his wawkin' boss down on de yearth, name Eli.

"Eli," say de Lawd, "how's de crops gittin' along?"

"Gittin' 'long good," say Eli. "De word I hyars f'm my boys is dat dey mighty nigh got de grass whupped outn de cotton, and ev'ything is about ready to lay by."

"But hit ain't laid by yit, Lawd," say Samuel. "'Cause de Philistines done stole all de mules."

"Shet up, Samuel," say Eli. "Ain't nobody axed you. You don't know nothin' 'bout de field work. All you know about is de house work. And de Lawd ain't got no time to listen at you, nohow."

"I ain't in no hurry," say de Lawd.

"I knows you ain't, Lawd," say Eli. "But dat boy is gittin' to be about de biggest liar I ever seed, and I don't want you to waste yo' time listenin' at his lies. I don't know what's gittin' into him, hyar lately. Used to, he was a good boy. He minded de front door and studied his books and learnt his Sunday-school lesson jest as slick as you please. But since I been stove up so's I can't

The Subtle Ways of the Lord

git around, he jest tuck to lyin' to hit's plum scandalous."

"Lyin' about which?" say de Lawd.

"About ev'ything," say Eli. "Ever since I got dat gimp in my back, well, I been makin' Hophni and Phineas do my bossin'. And, Lawd, dem boys knows how to boss a farm. But, naw! I set 'em to work, and den hyar come Samuel wid a big lie about how Hophni is out sportin' wid de womens, and how Phineas is quit work and gone fishin'. And when my boys gits home I axes 'em how come dey frivilin' instid er workin', and dey bofe say dey been workin' and Samuel been lyin'. So dat makes two ag'in' one, and dat puts Samuel a liar."

"Dat's quar," say de Lawd.

"I canes him for lyin', Lawd," say Eli. "But hit don't do no good."

"Sho is quar," say de Lawd. "Hit ain't no lies marked up ag'in' him in de sin book."

"He's mighty slick, Lawd," say Eli. "I was a long time gittin' on to him, myse'f."

Well, whilst de Lawd and Eli was tawkin' Samuel kind er sa'ntered off. So de Lawd called him and say, "Samuel?"

"What er you want, Daddy Eli?" say Samuel.

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"I ain't called you," say Eli.

So de Lawd called him again, "Samuel?"

"What you want, Daddy Eli?" Samuel say, jest like before.

"I ain't called you," say Eli.

"Well," say Samuel, "maybe I'm lyin' again, but hit sho sounds to me like you's callin'."

So de Lawd called him again, "Samuel?"

So Samuel came in de house. "Maybe you didn't call me," he say, "but hyar I is, handy, in case you change yo' mind."

"Dat wa'n't Eli callin' you, Samuel," say de Lawd. "Hit was me!"

"You call me, Lawd?" say Samuel. "What do de Lawd want wid a little boy like me?"

"I wants to know," say de Lawd, "what's de latest news you hyared about de Philistines?"

"Bad news," say Samuel. "Dey been drinkin' and goin' on about town for a week, now, and dat's de sign dey's fixin' to get drunk and light in on us Hebrews and pick a fight."

"And what y'all Hebrew boys plannin' to do?" say de Lawd.

"Run, I reckon," say Samuel. "Dat's what us most gen'ally does when dem sapsuckers gits after us."

The Subtle Ways of the Lord

"Don't stand up and lie smack to de Lawd!" say Eli. "My boys tells me us whups dem Philistines ev'y time dey come to town."

"Yo' boys say us mighty nigh got 'em runned to death," say Samuel, "but dey didn't tell you hit was runnin' after us which winded 'em."

"Ain't you ashame' to make a lie in front er de Lawd!" say Eli.

"Well," say de Lawd, "I'm gonter settle dis argyment right hyar and now. I'm gonter sick de Philistines on my chilluns, and de ones which is lyin' I'm gonter let de Philistines git, and de ones which is tellin' de trufe I'm gonter make git de Philistines."

"Dat's fair enough," say Eli, "only hit's kind er hard on Samuel. Go easy on him, Lawd, cause even efn he do lie a little bit, I promised his mammy I'd watch out for him, and I'd hate to tell her he been backslidin' in front er you and got hisse'f put in de dozens. And, Lawd, he ain't nothin' but a boy, too. He might outgrow dat lyin', sometime."

"Lemme mind my business, Eli," say de Lawd. "I got dis all planned out in my mind, and I'm aimin' to do hit jest like dat."

Ol' King David an' the Philistine Boys

So de Lawd lined up de Philistines on one side and de Hebrew boys on de yuther. "Now, quick as I gives de word," say de Lawd, "I want ev'ybody to pitch in, for who laid de rail!"

So he gived de word and ev'ybody pitched in. 'And you couldn't see nothin' but de skin and whiskers flyin'. So when de dust finally cleared away, dem Philistine boys was mighty nigh up to Brown's Crossin', wid little Samuel hot in behind 'em, chunkin' rocks at 'em at ev'y jump! But when de Hebrews rallied up to count noses, ole Eli's two boys wa'n't among de present. So dey carried de word to Eli dat de Philistines got his boys.

"Dat's bad," say Eli. "And hyar I been tryin' to study up how I'm gonter tell Samuel's mammy dat de Philistines got him for lyin' before de Lawd!"

"Don't you worry about Samuel," say de Lawd. "I had him in my plans a long time before he was bawn."

"Well," say Eli, "you know what you doin' all de time, Lawd. Sometime hit looked to me like you was messed up, but I kin see you wa'n't. I kin see you knowed what you was doin' all de time. When I b'lieved my boys ag'in' Samuel, I

The Subtle Ways of the Lord

thought I was smart, and I thought I was he'pin' you out, all de time. But I kin see now, you don't need no he'p f'm me."

So de Lawd he stood dar and looked at Eli, and Eli he looked at de Lawd. So finally de Lawd say, "Eli," he say, "when a natchal man gits smart enough to try to he'p me, well, I likes him. But when a natchal man gits smart enough to know I don't need no he'p, well, he too smart to waste his time on de yearth. Come, on home, son."



Frustrating Satan

WELL, quick as de Philistines hyared dat Samuel been made de Lawd's head man, dey pulled in dey hawns and hollered, "Ca'f rope."

"'Cause hit ain't no use in fightin' Samuel and de Lawd, too," dey say.

But old Satan he was kind er bossin' de Philistines and old Satan is always huntin' for devilment for his fo'ks to git into. "Go on and fight some more, Philistines," he say. "Y' all boys ain't gonter quit on me now, is you?"

"Naw, we ain't gonter quit," say de Philistines. "We done quit."

Frustrating Satan

So de Hebrews didn't had no more fightin' to do, so dey kept right at dey crops, and ev'ything was goin' along mighty good. So de Lawd he seed how things was goin', so he up and told old Samuel: "Samuel," he say, "hit ain't no need in me and you bofe stayin' hyar, and I got a heap er yuther stuff to do. De moon is kind er cankered, and de stars gittin' rusty. I bet Gabriel ain't done a lick er work since I left. Gabriel is mighty stiddy when I'm around, but quick as I turns my back he goes off in de woods and starts practicin' on dat hawn er hisn. And things gits in a turrible shape."

"Well, Lawd," say Samuel, "I ain't braggin'. But you needn't worry none about me and de Philistines. I kin whup 'em all before breakfast."

"Dat's de way I likes to hyar my wawkin' boss talk," say de Lawd. "'Cause I knows hit's a fack. But betwixt me and you and de gatepost, old Satan is kind er bossin' de Philistines, and Satan is mighty sly. A man got to be mighty lucky to git ahead er Satan."

"Well," say Samuel, "I kin handle de Philistines to de cows come home. But I kind er skeered my luck won't hold ag'in' Satan."

"I'll fix dat," say de Lawd. "I'll make you a

Ol' King David an' the Philistine Boys

lucky charm, so's you kin handle him. Who does you figger is about de luckiest man dat ever come to town?"

"Well," say Samuel, "when hit comes to downright luck, I reckon old Norah was about de luckiest man ever comed to town. 'Cause Norah he had him a ark when de backwater backed up all over ev'ything, and de luckiest man in town is a man which is got a dry place to sleep when de levees bust."

"Samuel," say de Lawd, "you's gittin' mighty nigh as smart as me. Dat's jest what I had in my mind, all de time, but I wanted you to figger hit out for yo'se'f. Now, you take and make me a little ark, jest like old Norah's, only littler, and I'll fix you some lucky stuff for hit."

So Samuel he built him a ark and de Lawd got busy puttin' lucky stuff in hit.

"Bring me some bread," say de Lawd. And he put de bread in de ark. "No matter how hongry you gits," say de Lawd, "you'll always have some bread around."

"Now bring me a feather outn a fryin'-size dominecker's wing." So Samuel brang de feather and de Lawd put dat in de ark. "Now," he say, "yo' troubles will fly away young."

Frustrating Satan

"Now bring me a buckeye seed." And he put dat in de ark along wid de yuther stuff. "Now yo' eyes will be big to see yo' way past de bad-luck spots in de road."

"Now bring me a frawg," say de Lawd, "so's no matter what happen, you kin keep hoppin'." So Samuel brang de frawg and de Lawd put him in de ark wid de yuther stuff.

"Now," he say, "go bring me some dingle dust."

So Samuel went over back er town and got some dingle dust and de Lawd tuck and sprinkled hit over de yuther stuff in de ark, all de time charmin': "Dingle dust, dingle dust, dingle dese charms! Dingle dust, dingle dust, dingle dese charms! And bring nothin' but luck to de man which got dis ark!"

Well, when de Lawd done dat he went on back and left Samuel wid de ark. And Samuel he got to feelin' mighty proud.

"Well," he say, "us ain't whupped dem Philistines since Sadday, and hyar hit is Chuesday. I b'lieve I'll line up my boys and go over and pick me a fight wid dem scound'els."

So Samuel lined up all de Hebrew boys and dey went over and lit in on de Philistines, and dey

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whapped 'em f'm Balmoral to Belial and den back again.

But hit jest goes to show you how tricky old Satan is! Old Satan was bossin' de Philistines, all right, but he wa'n't bossin' 'em when dey was fightin'. He let 'em do dey own fightin'. 'Cause he had him another job to do.

In de fust place, while de Lawd was fixin' up all dat lucky stuff for Samuel, old Satan was snake-in-de-grassin' right behind 'em all de time and he hyared ev'y word de Lawd said. So 'bout de time Samuel went out and lit in on de Philistines, Satan he sneaked up and stole dat ark!

So when de fightin' was over, Satan he went struttin' over to whar de Philistines was.

"Well," say Satan, "us didn't had much luck wid de fightin', boys, but jest looky what I picked up whilst y'all was runnin'!"

"What dat?" say de Philistines.

"Dat," say old Satan, "is Samuel's lucky charm. De Lawd made hit wid his own hands and hit's plum full er stuff which brings luck. Feathers and rabbit foots, and all dat kind er stuff. Hit's pyore luck for anybody which is got hit, 'cause I hyared de Lawd tell Samuel so. And I don't keer what you got ag'in' de Lawd, ain't

Frustrating Satan

nobody ever kotched him lyin' about nothin' yit."

"Un-hunh," say de Philistines. "F'm de way dem Hebrews whupped us, us'll be needin' dat lucky piece to stay outn dey way."

"Boys," say Satan, "y'all don't know what luck is! Tawk about runnin' when us got dis lucky ark on our side? Us ain't gonter run. Us is goin' right back cross town and whup dem Hebrews to de cows come home!"

So old Satan made de Philistine boys line up and rub dey hands on de ark to give 'em luck, and den he sont 'em back to whup de Hebrews.

But hit wa'n't no time to hyar dey come back! And what I mean, dey feet wa'n't hardly techin' de ground, dey was comin' so fast! Wid all de Hebrews hot in behind 'em, chunkin' rocks at 'em at ev'y jump!

"Dat's quar," say Satan. "I hyared de Lawd say dis ark was a lucky piece, wid my own ears, and dem boys got whupped so quick I couldn't hardly bat my eyes! Dat's plum quar!"

So he tuck his ark over to Miss Josie's, whar he was stayin' in dem days and times, and left hit at de house.

"What dat thing, Satan?" say Miss Josie.

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"Lucky piece," say Satan. "De Lawd hisse'f say hit was lucky."

But de next mawnin' Miss Josie woke up wid a buck aguer!

"You take dat thing outn my house, old Satan," she say. "Hit might be lucky, like you and de Lawd say, but I sho got me a buck aguer."

"De Lawd say ——" say Satan.

"I ain't studdin' de Lawd," say Miss Josie. "And you, too. I got a buck aguer, and I bet dat thing give me hit. You take hit out."

So Satan tuck de ark over to a widder woman friend er hisn, and de next news anybody hyared, dat widder woman tuck down wid de yallow janders!

So Satan he tuck hit over to another friend er hisn, and dis lady she tuck to bed wid de four-day fevers!

"Dat beats me all hollow," say old Satan. "I hyared de Lawd say hit was lucky, and hyar my boys got whupped and all my lady friends is sick. I jest wonder, now, was de Lawd tellin' a lie about dis box?"

So old Satan set and worried and worried. He been tryin' to ketch de Lawd in a lie, all his life, and he done had about give up. So finally he

Frustrating Satan

couldn't stand hit no longer and he went up and axed de Lawd. "Lawd?" he axed him.

"What you want, Satan?" say de Lawd.

"You's ag'in' lyin', ain't you?" say Satan.

"Plum ag'in' hit," say de Lawd. "I won't never let my people lie."

"Maybe dat's hit," say Satan. "Maybe you won't let yo' people lie, but when hit comes right down to yo'se'f, well ——"

"Don't you call me no liar, Satan," say de Lawd. "I won't never do nothin' I won't let my people do."

So Satan he laughed and slapped his laig at de Lawd. "Dat's whar I kotched you, Lawd," he say. "'Cause I hyared you tell Samuel wid my own ears dat dis ark would bring luck to anybody which had hit! I hyared you, Lawd, plain. And you can't crawfish outn sayin' dat."

"Dat's zackly what I said," say de Lawd, "and dat's zackly what I meant."

So Satan he laughed again. "Well," he say, "quick as I got dis lucky piece de Philistines got about de worst lickin' I ever seed 'em git. And den all my lady friends tuck down sick ——"

"Hold on, Satan," say de Lawd. "I knows what you's drivin' at. You's fixin' to tawk yo'se'f

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around and say I been lyin'. And den I might git r'iled and smack you down."

"But, Lawd ——"

"Don't 'but' me, Satan," say de Lawd. "I said dat box'd bring luck to anybody which had hit, and dat's what I meant. But I didn't said what kind er luck."

"What do dat mean, Lawd?" say Satan.

"Hit mean dat when I said luck, I had in my mind dat de box'd bring good luck to good people, and bad luck to bad people. Dat's what I had in my mind, and didn't say out, 'cause I knowed you'd about be snake-in-de-grassin' around, listenin' at me. You think you's mighty smart, don't you? Well, you might snake-in-de-grass Samuel, but you can't snake-in-de-grass me, 'cause I don't keer how smart you is, well, I'm smarter dan dat.

"And de next time," say de Lawd, "dat I give Samuel somethin' to bring him luck, well, you better keep yo' roguish hands off, 'cause I bet I'll break you out wid de small-pox!"



Country Boy

DE HEBREW chilluns was jest like anybody else's chilluns. Ev'y time dey seed somethin', well, dey wanted hit. So one day dey seed somebody wid a king. So dey allowed dey was jest bound to have a king, too.

"Samuel," say de Hebrews, "whyn't you put a crown on yo' haid and king around town some?"

"Me?" say Samuel. "My haid ain't made to fit no crown, chilluns. My haid is so full er brains and stuff to hit do right well to fit dis old plug hat I'm a-wearin'."

"Well," say de Hebrews, "dat's too bad, 'cause

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us done bought you a six-and-seven-eighths crown, scusin' how you was de Lawd's wawkin' boss. But efn hit won't fit you, well, maybe us kin find a king which hit will fit."

So Samuel went and axed de Lawd what about dat. "Lawd," he say, "I ain't de kind er man to brag on myse'f. But you know good as me I kept dem chilluns turnin' f'm sunup to sundown."

"Dat's right," say de Lawd, "you kept 'em goin' f'm can to can't."

"And I preaches at 'em ev'y Sunday," say Samuel.

"Ev'y Sunday," say de Lawd, "rain or shine."

"So dey wants a king," say Samuel.

"And dey gonter git a king, too, Samuel," say de Lawd. "Me, I'm ag'in' kings, sort er, but hit's a part er my plan to let my chilluns git what dey wants. And efn dey wants a king, well, dey gonter git one."

Well, Samuel wa'n't de kind er man to argy back at de Lawd, but he had some ideas all he own. So he say, "Well, Lawd, maybe efn de king is six foot tall, maybe he won't be so bad."

"Yeah," say de Lawd, "he got to be six foot tall, same as me."

"Wid a heavy bass voice, too," say Samuel.

Country Boy

"I likes a bass voice," say de Lawd.

"And kind er easy-tongued, too, Lawd," say Samuel, "so's he kin joke and carry on wid de ladies."

"Yeah," say de Lawd, "a king got to socialize heavy."

"But mannish," say Samuel, "'cause efn de king pass a law and don't put no stuff on hit, well, won't nobody pay him no mind."

"Plum right, Samuel," say de Lawd. "A king got to put some stuff on his laws which he passes."

"Well, Lawd," say Samuel, "efn you got yo' mind made up about dat king, well, le's I and you amble 'round and see kin us find a man like us is huntin' for."

"Nawp," say de Lawd. "I'm ag'in' huntin' for a man to be king, 'cause ev'y time I sets out to hunt somebody, well, dat is jest de time I don't find him. But when I'm jest ramblin' 'round, not huntin' for nobody, well, mighty nigh ev'y time I comes square up on de man which I ain't huntin' for."

So Samuel and de Lawd struck out down de road, not huntin' for nobody. And sho'nuff, all

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at once dey come up on a country boy named Saul.

" 'Scuse me, mister," say Saul, "but y'all ain't seed no mule strayin' along, is you? My daddy's mule got outn de barn last night and I can't find him nowheres."

"What yo' name, son?" say de Lawd.

"My name is Saul," say Saul, "but de mule he name is old Alec. He is kind er roan, wid jack stripes ——"

"Whar you from, Saul?" say de Lawd.

"I comes f'm Knob Creek," say Saul. "But de mule he comed offn de Henning Farm. My daddy got him last fall. He kind er stove up in his off hind laig, and deaf."

"Knob Creek, hunh?" say de Lawd. "Do de Hebrews over yo' way tawk like dey wants a king?"

"Nawsuh, I don't reckon so," say Saul. "Least, I ain't hyared 'em wantin' nothin' but a little rain now and den, for de cotton."

"Well, does you want a king?" say de Lawd.

"Nawsuh," say Saul. "I wants old Alec. He's blind in one eye and a fool about his years when you puts a bridle on him."

Country Boy

"You don't know what a king is, does you, son?" say de Lawd.

"Nawsuh," say Saul. "I know what a king snake is, but I don't like snakes."

"Well," say de Lawd, "bend yo' haid over whilst I pour some er dis stuff on hit."

"What kind er stuff?" say Saul.

"Lucky stuff," say de Lawd. "Hit might he'p you find yo' mule."

So de boy bunt his haid over and de Lawd an'inted him and told him to go on back home and spread de word to all his fo'ks. "Tell 'em," say de Lawd, "dat you hyared a man say de Lawd and Samuel was gonter pick out a king next Sadday, and ev'ybody better come to town, 'cause hit's liable to be some tall doin's."

So de boy he went on back home, and Samuel he told de Lawd: "Lawd," he say, "you hadn't ought to waste all dat king oil on dat country boy. Now s'posin' us comed up on a six-foot man wid a bass voice and a easy jaw wid de ladies, and mannish. What'd you an'int him king wid?"

"Samuel," say de Lawd, "you ought to been knowin' me long enough to know I ain't gonter git myse'f kitched out on dat kind er limb."

"You's mighty smart, Lawd," say Samuel,

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"but all de same, dat's all de king oil us had, and dat stuff is powerful hard to make."

So Samuel and de Lawd rambled all over de county, but dey didn't come up on no man six foot tall wid a bass voice and a easy tongue and mannish ways. So when Sadday rolled around dey come to town, to socialize wid all de fo'ks.

Well, ev'ybody was in town, dressed in dey Sunday clothes, eatin' sardine fishes and cheese and crackers and drinkin' soda pop and carryin' on, and wonderin' who de Lawd gonter make king.

"Must be my husband," say Miz Rucker, "'cause he's plum six foot tall."

"Yeah?" say Miz Reed. "But kin he bass, like my husband kin?"

"Bass, hunh?" say Miz Bostic. "Who keers anything about a bass-singin' king? Now you take my husband, well, he got so many jokes right now dat all de ladies is plum crazy to have him for de king."

"Humph!" say Miz Lacy. "Crazy is right! How a jokin' king gonter pass a law? Did he pass a law, ev'ybody'd think hit was a joke, and jest laugh. Now you take old Lacy, now. When he

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say somethin' he say hit so mean to you b'lieves him, even efn you knows he's lyin'."

So dat's de way de tawk run, to finally de Lawd got in de pulpit. "Chillun," he say, "I'm gonter make y'all a king."

"Amen," say de chilluns.

"Me, I figgered I was about enough king for y'all, but y'all allowed you wanted a wawkin' boss, so I gived you a wawkin' boss, too."

"Amen," say de chilluns. "Praise de Lawd."

"But now y'all got me and a wawkin' boss, too. So you wants a king. Well, hit looks like y'all is plum hawgs to git bossed."

"Amen," say de chilluns. "Ain't hit de trufe, Lawd?"

"Well," say de Lawd, "ev'ybody watch me whilst I makes dis king. . . . Whar Saul at?"

"Hyar I'm at, Lawd," say Saul. "Much oblige for dat lucky stuff. Hit he'ped me find old Alec, all right. De man f'm de Henning Farm comed and got him, 'cause my daddy jest tuck him, one night ——"

"No mind dat," say de Lawd. "Come on down hyar. Now, stand up straight. Git dat hump offn yo' back—now, dat's hit." So de Lawd made a pass or two over Saul's haid and den sot de

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crown on hit! "Heavy, heavy hangs over yo' haid, King Saul," say de Lawd. "Long may you wave!"

So Samuel tuck out his tape line and measured Saul, and he was jest six foot tall f'm his heels to de top er his crown!

So when Saul found out what had done happened, he stuck out his chist and started tawkin' deep down in his th'oat. "So I'm de king, hunh?" he say. "Well, jest watch me do some kingin'!"

"Dar, now," say Miz Reed. "Listen at dat scound'el's majesty tawkin' bass! I bet he drags up a heavy second in de singin'!"

So Saul looked at her outn de cornders er his eye. "You likes dat bass, hunh, good-lookin'?" he say. "Well, dat's jest one thing about me which you likes. Wait to you gits to knowin' me good, and I bet you'll be wantin' to quit yo' husband!"

So Samuel seed how Saul was turnin' out, and he was kinder glad. "You's six foot tall now," he say, "and you basses ve'y well, and you jokes wid de ladies, all O. K. But, Saul, you kinder want to ack mannish ——"

"Don't call me Saul, ole granddaddy," say Saul. "Call me King Saul. My Majesty jest can't

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stand to have nobody call me Saul when I'm a king!"

So de Lawd hyared dat, and he grabbed Samuel and led him outn de church. "Is dat mannish enough for you, Samuel?" he say.

"Dat ain't mannish," say Samuel. "Dat's pyore uppity sass!"

"Hit amounts to about de same thing," say de Lawd. "Only, most fo'ks don't know hit. And what fo'ks don't know ain't no skin offn yo' back."

"Dat's all right, Lawd," say Samuel. "Hit's still uppity sass. And dat ain't all. Efn anybody ever takes his measure when he ain't got dat crown on his haid, he won't be six foot tall. And dat bass-tawkin' was all put on wid him, 'cause he don't tawk bass natchal. And de ladies pay mind to him jest 'cause he's king, and efn dey didn't, well, he wouldn't know what to say back at 'em."

"Dat's right, Samuel," say de Lawd. "Take dat crown offn his haid, and he wouldn't amount to much, would he?"

"Nothin' but a sassy country boy which comed to town," say Samuel.

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"All country boys is like dat," say de Lawd.
"Quick as dey comes to town dey gits sassy."

"Well, efn you knowed all er dat, Lawd," say Samuel, "how come you made him de king?"

"I kin see," say de Lawd, "dat you ain't never had no chilluns. 'Cause efn you had, you'd know dat when chilluns want something which ain't good for 'em, well, de best thing to do is give 'em dey bellyful and make 'em sick of hit right away."

"Well," say Samuel, "I bet dey gits dey bellyful er dat sassy Saul in no time."

"Not 'sassy Saul,' " say de Lawd. "King Saul."

"Hit's all one and de same to me," say Samuel.



Little David and His Mouth Harp

SAMUEL was a man which never argied back at de Lawd, no matter how things went. But Samuel had a haid on his shoulders as long as a mule's, and sometimes when hit looked like de Lawd had done turned his back on him and was gittin' him all mixed up in de dozens, well, Samuel got out and done a little stuff on his own hook.

"I ain't complainin', Lawd," Samuel say, "I kin call dat foolish boy, old King Saul, His Majesty efn he got his haid sot on me callin' him dat. I kin cross my fingers and call him anything he wants me to call him. But what gits my

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Af'ican r'iled up is how he don't do nothin' but jest set back and king!"

"Saul," say de Lawd, "figgers he's gittin' along right good wid his kingin'. Least, dat's what I hyared him say a couple er times."

"Cou'se he do," say Samuel. "He ain't got no more sense den dat. But f'm de news I hyars spread about de store, he's about de onliest man in town which figgers like dat, 'cause de news I hyars ev'ybody is gittin' mighty sick of his uppity ways."

"Fo'ks," say de Lawd, "is like dat. Dey want somethin' so bad dey 'bout to bust. Den, quick as dey gits hit, well, dey don't want hit no more."

So Samuel he sot and thought and thought. "I been sort er thinkin' dat, scusin' how you is ag'in' kings and I'm ag'in' kings and de chilluns done kind er got dey bellyful er Saul, well, hit'd be a mighty good time to haul off and fire Saul, 'cause us don't need him. I does de preachin' and I leads de singin', and when de Philistines comes to town I line up de boys and whups 'em. So you see, Lawd, Saul don't do a lick er work."

Well, de Lawd sot and rocked back and fo'th awhile like he's a good plan. Den all at once he change his mind.

Little David and His Mouth Harp

"Nawp, Samuel," he say. "Hit sounds all right de way you tawks hit, but I ain't gonter do dat, 'cause, Samuel, me and you us got sense enough to know a king ain't no good for de chilluns. Us had we's bellyful er kings before us got Saul, but what about de chilluns?"

"Dey got dey bellyful er Saul, Lawd," say Samuel.

"Naw, dey ain't, Samuel," say de Lawd. "Dey jest thinks dey is. Dat's de way wid my chilluns. Dey ain't stiddy in dey minds yit, 'cause what I'm aimin' to do is give dem scound'els so much king to dey gits plum foundered on kings. I wants 'em so sick er kings to all anybody got to do is say 'king' at 'em, and dey'll jump up and whup you right on de spot."

So de Lawd wawked on and Samuel he jest sot and smoked and let what de Lawd had said simmer in his mind. After a while he hollered back in de house and say, "Old lady," he say, "you fixin' to have chicken for supper, ain't you?"

"Yeah," say Miz Samuel.

"Well," say Samuel, "you take and save me de gizzards outn de pot."

"What you want wid de gizzards, Samuel?" she say.

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"I want you to take and fry 'em down to cracklin's," say Samuel. "And den you take de gizzard juice and put a little vinegar and sugar in hit, and add some yarbs and stuff, and den bile hit down to hit's right surrupy."

"Dat's what I done when I made you dat king oil, ain't hit?" say Miz Samuel.

"No mind dat," say Samuel. "You do like I tell you."

"You ain't countin' on another king, is you?" she say. "F'm de way you been grumblin' about de king you got, well, looks to me like you'd have enough kings to do you a month er Sundays. But, naw! You sets and grumbles about what you got, and all de time you's fixin' for more."

"No mind dat chatter-chatter, old woman," say Samuel. "When I gits ready to do somethin', de Lawd don't butt in and ax me what I'm fixin' to do. And I don't see how come you got to know mo'n de Lawd."

So Miz Samuel fixed up de king oil, and Samuel dreened hit in a bottle, and got his hat and struck out down de road. "I'm gonter find me a man," say Samuel, "which is so big and bad dat soon as dat uppity Saul see him comin', well, he'll light a shuck. And quick as I find dat

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man," say Samuel, "I'm gonter pour dis stuff on his haid, and den hit'll be up to him and Saul which is gonter be de king and which ain't."

Well, de more he studied over his plan de better hit looked. " 'Cause I don't keer how lazy de new king gonter be," he say, "he bound to be smarter den Saul."

So Samuel was wawkin' down de road, tawkin' to hisse'f about de new king he gonter find, and feelin' mighty proud about how he gonter he'p de Lawd outn his troubles, when all at once, kerblip! a rock tuck him right squar on top er his tall hat!

"Who dat chunkin' rocks at me?" say Samuel.

But didn't nobody said nothin'.

"Efn hit's a Philistine chunkin' at me," say Samuel, "I'm gonter line up de boys and run you to Kingdom Come!"

So about dat time a little boy named Little David stepped outn de bushes. "I ain't no Philistine, Mister Samuel," say Little David. "I'm a Hebrew boy. I was out chunkin' rocks at gi'nts, and when I seed dat hat er yo'n stickin' up, I says, 'Well, maybe dat's a gi'nt.' So I up and chunked."

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"Yeah," say Samuel, "you sho did! And you mighty nigh ruint my hat, too."

"I always ruins ev'ything I th'ows at," say Little David.

"Is dat a fack?" say Samuel, and he sot down on a rock, and him and Little David got to tawkin' 'bout fust one thing and den de yuther.

"Yonder come a wolf, Little David," say Samuel. "Ain't you skeered?"

"Whar de wolf?" say Little David. So he tuck a rock and chunked at de wolf, kerblop! and de wolf rolled over and died daid!

"Well, dawg my cats!" say Samuel. "Son, I wonder how tall you gonter be when you gits grewed up?"

"Tall as my pappy," say Little David.

"How tall is yo' pappy?" say Samuel.

"Mighty tall," say Little David. "Taller den you."

"Well, I swear!" say Saumel, and he sot and grinned to hisse'f a while. "De Lawd told me one time when he was huntin' for a man, well, he never did find one, and I bet he was speakin' a parable to me and I didn't know hit.

"Kin you do any singin', Little David?" say Samuel.

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"Nawsuh," say Little David. "Not none."

"Uh-unh," say Samuel. "I knowed hit was too good to last long."

"But I kin blow my harp," say Little David. "Want to hyar me?"

"Blow me a few hymns," say Samuel.

So David tuck his harp and blowed hymns for a solid hour.

"Well, suh," say Samuel, "dat jest beats de jukes!"

"I knows a heap er yuther tunes, too," say Little David. "You want to hyar me blow some more."

"No mind now," say Samuel. "Lemme see what's dat on top er yo' haid?"

"I know," say Little David. "Hit's hair. I knows a heap er jokes like dat. Efn I'd 'a' put my hand on top er my haid to feel, well, hit'd 'a' been my hand."

"Dat's too many for me," say Samuel, and he sot and laughed. "But I wa'n't meanin' dat for a joke. Bend yo' haid over and lemme see."

So Little David tuck and bunt his haid over and Samuel poured de king oil on him. "Dat'll make yo' hair grow, son," he say.

"Thanky, suh," say Little David. "I reckon I

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better be gittin' on home now. Good-by, Mister Samuel. Come and see us some time."

"Good-by, son," say Samuel. "You come and see me, too."

So Samuel got up and started home, and about de time he got to de forks in de road, hyar stood de Lawd.

"Which er way, Samuel?" say de Lawd.

"Gittin' home for supper," say Samuel. "De old lady kilt a chicken or so. Better come on, Lawd, and have a snack."

"Dat how come you lookin' so spry?" say de Lawd.

"I likes chicken," say Samuel.

"Un-hunh," say de Lawd. "But you been up to somethin' else."

"Lawd," say Samuel, "does you reckon a little boy kin th'ow a rock hard enough to knock Saul in de middle er next week?"

"Hit's a boy name Little David which kin," say de Lawd.

"Dat's what I figgered," say Samuel.

"But he ain't gonter," say de Lawd. "Him and nobody else ain't gonter never hit Saul wid nothin'. Never."

So Samuel didn't said nothin'. He jest slowed

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down and staggered a couple er times and den he sot. "'Scuse me, Lawd," he say. "I'm kind er weary. I reckon I must be gittin' agety."

"You is, Samuel," say de Lawd. "But no mind dat, and don't you weary about Little David and dat rock, too. I know what you been up to, and efn hit hadn't been in my plans, you wouldn't 'a' done hit. I made Little David chunk dat rock at you. Now git up and come on, 'cause you know how Miz Samuel grumbles when she has to wait supper."



The Old Witch Woman

WELL, de Lawd tuck Saul outn de country, but he didn't take de country outn Saul, and hit wa'n't long to de people got on to him.

"Old King Saul, Yo' Majesty," say de people, "you ain't so much."

"Well," say Saul, "I'm de onliest king in dis man's town. Dat is somethin'. And de Lawd hunted f'm Balmoral to Belial before he found me for y'all's king. Now maybe de Lawd made a mistake. I ain't sayin'. But hit look to me like de Lawd done purty good."

So he jest r'ar' back in his cheer and jawed wid de ladies and kinged all over ev'ything, and

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bragged about what he gonter do when he gits started.

But when hit come downright to de work, old Brother Samuel was de man which done dat. He done all de preachin' and he led 'em in all de fightin', and he kept 'em turnin' in de fields.

But one day old Brother Samuel up and died!

"Who gonter preach de funeral?" say de people.

"De funeral?" say old King Saul. "Samuel been preachin' all de funerals, ain't he?"

"Dis is one he ain't gonter preach," say de people. "He's daid."

"Well, I be dad blame!" say de king. "Ain't dat jest like Samuel to up and die on me when I needs him to preach a funeral?"

"Dat ain't gittin' de funeral preach," say de people.

"Well, I'm de king," say old King Saul, "so I'm gonter pass me a law which say you ain't got to preach no funeral. All you got to do is jest do some singin'. I don't like funerals, nohow."

"Well, who gonter lead de singin'?" say de people.

"Samuel he —— Well, dad gum ev'ything I kin think of!" say Saul. "I done got myse'f out

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on a limb. Accordin' to my law, hit's got to be some singin', and hyar old Samuel done died and can't lead de singin'. Dat sho was a fool law I passed."

"Hit sho was," say de people. "What you gonter do about hit?"

"I'll ax Samuel," say Saul. "He knows about all er dat stuff."

"He daid now," say de people. "Won't do no good to ax him. You jest bit off mo'n you kin chew, old King Saul, Yo' Majesty."

"I swear!" say Saul. "Dat man jest died to do me dirt!"

Well de people jawed and argied, and Saul he set and he figgered. But he didn't git nowhars wid his figgerin'. To finally he hyared about a widder woman name old Miz Enders which was purty good at witchin'.

"I b'lieve I'm gonter go over back er town and ax her," say Saul. "Cou'se I don't b'lieve in dat stuff, but hit 'twon't do no harm."

So he went over to see Miz Enders. "Miz Enders," he say, "My Majesty needs some adwice."

So Miz Enders shet her eyes and say, "Country boy," she say, "pin a dollar bill on my dress."

The Old Witch Woman

So Saul done dat and she up and read his pa'm. "You been kind er lucky in love," say Miz Enders, "and you been had a mighty easy job."

"Dat's right," say Saul. "Say on, old woman."

"Pin another dollar on my dress to clear up my sight," she say.

So Saul done dat, and de witch woman told him some more. "I sees a old man," she say, "ramblin' hyar and yonder, oneasy in his mind 'cause he's daid and ain't been buried."

"Dat's Samuel," say Saul. "Say on."

"And I sees a stranger," say de woman. "He's blowin' a harp wid one hand and th'owin' rocks wid de yuther."

"Who he th'owin' dem rocks at?" say Saul.

"Gi'nts," say de woman.

"I'm six foot tall," say Saul. "Is he chunkin' dem rocks at me?"

But de witch woman couldn't tell him. "Hit ain't nothin' else in my sight," she say. "I gived you de signs, and you got to figger 'em out for yo'se'f."

"I ain't much at figgerin'," say Saul. "Samuel he done all er my figgerin'. And now he daid and can't. So dat's how come I axed you."

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"Samuel ain't been buried yit, is he?" say de witch woman.

"Naw," say Saul. "Dat's how come ——"

"Put a five-dollar bill on my dress," say de woman, "and I'll see what I kin do."

So Saul he pinned a five-dollar bill on de woman's dress, and she made a few passes and say: "Abjal, Zabzal, Hoborum, Koborum! Samuel, arise and come to me by de air!"

And dar stood Samuel.

"Brother Samuel," say Saul, "I'm in a mess er trouble."

"You been in dat same mess ev'y since you had dat crown on yo' haid," say Samuel, "but you didn't had sense enough to know hit when I was doin' all de work."

"Dat ain't de p'int," say Saul. "De p'int is ——"

"De pi'nt is on yo' swowd, Saul," say Samuel. "Dat de only p'int which gonter ease yo' troubles."

"Man, don't tawk like dat at me," say Saul. "Hit skeers me."

"Well," say Samuel, "I'm gonter tell you plain. You's wearied about my funeral. So hit ain't no need to weary about dat, 'cause I'm done

The Old Witch Woman

daid. All you got to do is go git Little David, which de witch woman told you about."

"Never hyared er him," say Saul.

"You'll hyar a heap about dat harp-blowin', rock-flingin' boy before you dies."

"Dar you go, now," say Saul. "Fust you tawk about de p'int er my swowd, and den about dat rock-flingin' boy, and den about when I dies. I swear, Samuel, you sho ain't no fun to tawk to. Ev'y time you opens yo' mouf you gives me de all-overs."

"Well," say Samuel, "you git Little David wid his harp to lead de singin' at my funeral. You kin onderstand dat, can't you?"

"Yassuh," say Saul. "But he won't hit me wid no rock, will he?"

But old Samuel had done vanished in de air.

So Saul went on back home and sont for Little David. "Little David," he say, "I hyars tell you blows a harp right good," say Saul.

"Old King Saul, Yo' Majesty," say Little David, "I ain't braggin', but you jest ought to hyar me choke one down. I kin make hit moan and groan to tears dreem outn my own eyes."

"And," say Saul, "you chunks rocks, too, I hyars?"

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"Only one rock," say Little David. "One rock is aplenty."

Well, Saul he worried and worried about dat, 'cause he b'lieved in his soul dat Little David was fixin' to fling a rock at him. And de more he worried, de skeereder he got. To all at once Saul grabbed up a swowd and flang hit at Little David.

So David he dodged and laughed. "Efn you don't th'ow straighter'n dat," he say, "I won't play wid you."

So Saul flang another swowd at him, and David dodged dat'n'.

"Looky hyar, old King Saul, Yo' Majesty," say Little David. "Dat makes me mad to git swowds chunked at me. Efn you was ten foot taller I'd peel you wid a rock."

"Is dat a fack?" say Saul. "Well, I might not be ten foot taller, and I might not kin th'ow straight. But My Majesty sho kin cut straight!" So he grabbed him another swowd and lit out after Little David.

But Little David was too smart for him. He jest ducked and run back, right 'twixt old King Saul's laigs, and he tripped Saul down as he passed.

The Old Witch Woman

So Saul he stumbled and fell down on de p'int er his sword, and he died.

"I reckon dat was what dat witch woman and old Samuel's ha'nt was tawkin' about," he say. "I fell down on de p'int er my own swowd and kilt myse'f, when I was tryin' to kill dat harp-blowin', rock-flingin' Little David. Well, I was gittin' kind er tired er bein' king, anyways."

So Little David he led de singin' at de funeral wid his harp, and he preached de funeral, too. So he was de king.



The Wild-oat Harvest of Old King David

KING DAVID turned out to be a king which was handy around de womenfo'ks, and de womenfo'ks was just pyore wild about him. Ev'y time he'd step outn de house all de gals'd say, "Yonder comes His Good-lookin' Majesty! I sho wisht I wa'n't married!"

"Dat's awright, baby," old King David would say back at 'em, "I'll fix dat." And he would.

Well, de Lawd he liked David a heap, and he put up wid a lot er stuff f'm him which he wouldn't 'a' put up wid f'm nobody else, hardly. But David got so scand'lous dat he kind er vexed de Lawd.

The Wild-oat Harvest of Old King David

"David," say de Lawd, "you's young now and filled up wid wild oats. But I'm kind er skeered dat when you gits old and start in thrashin' dese wild oats you's sowin', well, I'm skeered you gonter have to do yo' thrashin' mighty close to home."

"When I gits too old to sow 'em, Lawd," say David, "well, den I'll commence worryin' about thrashin' 'em."

"Dat's de p'int," say de Lawd. "When you git too old, well, you be done got de habit, and you won't never know you's too old, to fust thing you know you gonter think you's out sowin' oats, when all de time you's a-thrashin' 'em."

"I ain't gonter git dat bad, Lawd," say David. "I knows when to quit."

"Yeah?" say de Lawd. "I's seen a heap er old bucks runnin' around, thinkin' they's sowin' oats, when they ain't sowin' a thing but trouble for theyse'ves."

So David he promised to try to behave hisse'f, but he didn't do much good at hit. So finally, he got to gittin' gray-headed wid a long beard. So he hyared about a young widder woman over back er town named Miz Conkybine, who lived over across de creek.

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"Absalom," say King David, "go saddle me up a mule. I b'lieve I'm gonter ride about de field some tonight and see is all de fences up."

"Yassuh, pappy, Yo' Majesty," say Absalom. "But ain't hit kind er funny to go seein' about de fences at night? You oughter do dat in de daytime."

"Too busy kingin' in de daytime," say David. "Now don't argy wid yo' daddy. Go saddle dat mule."

So Absalom saddled de mule and King David rid off twarge de field. And de next night he done de same way, and de next.

But when hit come Sadday night, David allowed he'd better stay at home and git his sermon ready for de next day. "'Cause hit's a heap er sin goin' on in dis town," he say. "And I got to git in some heavy licks on old Satan, or de fust thing I know he'll be runnin' away wid dis whole town."

Well, King David stayed home. But not Absalom. All de time King David was tellin' him he was ridin' on de fences. Well, Absalom didn't much b'lieve hit. So when night come, he wanted to find out for sho.

So he went out and saddled up King David's

The Wild-oat Harvest of Old King David

mule, jest like he been doin', and he led de mule around to whar David been gittin' on him, and den Absalom climbed on de mule, hisse'f!

"Git up, mule," say Absalom. "You jest go on; don't mind me." So he give de mule his head and de mule started off. He wawked out to de edge er de field and started down de fence row, jest like King David had been ridin' fences on him, ev'y night.

"I be dog!" say Absalom. "I b'lieve pappy is been ridin' fences, at dat!"

But about de time he said dat de mule turned and struck out across de creek bottom.

"Un-unh!" say Absalom. "De king been ridin' like dis jest to put fo'ks offn de scent. I'm gonter see whar dis mule is goin' next!"

Well, de mule he went right straight across de creek and up de path, to fust thing Absalom knowed he comed up to a little house in de edge er de clearin', and he stopped still.

"Well," say Absalom, "I don't know whar dis is, but f'm de way de mule acks, hit must be whar I'm goin' at tonight." So he looked about and didn't see nobody, so he hollered.

"Who dar?" Hit was de Widder Conkybine.

"Hit's me," say Absalom.

Ol' King David an' the Philistine Boys

"Well, come on in, Yo' Majesty," she say. "I wa'n't lookin' for you tonight, 'cause I thought you said you had to git yo' sermon up."

So Absalom hitched de mule to de gatepost and went in.

"You ain't de king!" say de widder woman. "When you hollered you sho sounded like de king, and you ain't him!"

So Absalom sort er laughed and den he sort er sung:

"I ain't de king; I'm his oldest son;
But I'll do yo' kingin' to de cows come home!"

"Aw, listen at dat!" say Miz Conkybine. "Ain't you de beatinest man to sing like dat at me! I bet yo' name is dat handsome scound'el de gals been tawkin' about named Absalom, ain't you?"

"Go on, purty," say Absalom. "You don't mean dat. You jest tryin' to joke me along. I know what my daddy is been up to wid dat mule, now. Dat mule know his way over hyar too good for you to go sweet-tawkin' anybody but de king. You can't fool a mule."

"Naw," say Miz Conkybine, "but I kin fool de king. I likes His Majesty 'cause he brings me

The Wild-oat Harvest of Old King David

heap er presents. But I don't love him like I does you. You want me to give you de presents which de king gived me?"

So de tawk runned along f'm fust one thing to de yuther, to all at once hit was a mighty roarin' goin' on at de gate.

"What dat?" say Absalom.

"Sound like de king," say de widder woman.

So about dat time King David hollered, "Who dat in de house wid my widder woman friend?"

"Ain't nobody in hyar, sweetnin'," say de widder woman. "Nobody but Conky. I jest settin' hyar all by myse'f."

"Well," say King David, "how come dis mule hitched to de gatepos?"

"I don't know," say de woman. "Whose mule is hit?"

So David looked at de mule. "Hit's my mule," he say.

"Well," say de woman, "hit's yo' mule and hit's yo' hitchin'-place. So you ain't got no call to git jealous."

"I didn't ride dat mule over hyar," say David. "'Cause efn I did, how come my britches wet whar I felled in de creek offn de foot log? Hit's some quar goin's-on around hyar, gal. Hit's my

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mule and my saddle and he hitched right whar I allus hitches him. But I swear my britches is wet whar I felled offn dat foot log!"

"Aw, darlin'," say de widder woman, "maybe you jest rid him over and forgits."

"Well," say David, "efn I did, how come my britches wet, hunh? Tell me dat!"

So when she couldn't, old David got madder and madder. "Gal," he say, "I bet hits some snake-in-de-grassin' goin' on in dis house, and I'm comin' in right now to find out about hit!"

"I guess I better crawl under de bed," say Absalom.

"Naw you don't," say de woman. "I ain't gonter let de king find no good-lookin' man like you under my bed. You gonter go out de back door, son, and quick as I shet de front door you gonter git on dat mule and git him on down de road."

"How come?" say Absalom.

"Don't argy wid me now, man," say de woman. "I know what I'm up to. Git yo' hat, now, and travel. I know how to handle dis, but don't argy."

So Absalom got on away, and when David

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comed in he hunted all over de house, but he didn't find nobody.

"But I seed my mule," say David, "and I know I didn't ride him, 'cause look at my britches! And look at dat mud on my shoes, too!"

"Well," say Miz Conkybine, "efn you seed a mule out dar, he must be out dar, but I don't see no mule and I ain't hyared no mule." So to prove hit, David lit de lantern and took her out to de gate. But de mule wa'n't around.

"Well, I be dog!" say David. "You sho was right, baby. I jest got jealous tonight and got to wonderin' was somebody over hyar, and I come runnin' over to see. And dat's what made me see dat mule! I might 'a' knowed you wouldn't do me like dat. Would you, baby?"

"Not me, King," say de woman. "'Cause I loves you too good. Did you bring me a present?"

So dey sot around awhile, tawkin' and goin' on, to finally David allowed he'd be gittin' on back and finish his sermon about sin. "'Cause I sees enough sin goin' on in dis town," he say, "to make old Satan ashamed er hisse'f."

"Ain't hit de trufe?" say de woman. "And I bet hit's a heap you don't see, too."

So David struck out for home, and about de

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time he comed to de creek he seed Absalom hangin' by his chin in de forks of a limb.

"What you doin' up in dat tree, son?" say David.

"Jest hangin' hyar," say Absalom.

"How come?" say David.

"I was jest runnin' ——"

"Don't lie to me, Absalom," say David. 'I'll whale you good efn you lies. How come you hangin' up in dat tree?"

So Absalom was skeered to lie, so he told King David all about how he runned away wid de mule and de mule runned under de limb and kitched his neck and left him swingin'.

"So you was over to de widder woman's house, hunh?" say David.

"Yassuh, but ——"

"Don't but me, son," say David. "I know what you was up to, good as you do. De Lawd tole me to mind out about my wild oats, and you's about my fust one. I sowed a heap er oats in my own time, but I didn't know when to quit. Hyar I been eyein' around at dat widder woman, and hyar was you over puttin' de hawns on me! Well, I'm done sowin' my oats now, so I guess I might

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jest as well start thrashin' 'em, and you'll be about as good a place to start as de next one!"

So David cut him a cane and he lit in and gave Absalom a thrashin' whilst he was hangin' up in de tree: "I ain't doin' dis 'cause I'm mad, son," say David. "I'm doin' hit for yo' own good. You know better den to ride my mules out at night, after dey's been workin' all day. Now you stay outn dat barn, or I bet I set you afire."



The Widow Woman Named Ruth

WELL, they was a man named Brother Boaz and he was a mighty good man. He done his farmin' endurin' de week, and he done de preachin' on Sunday. And f'm de way he worked and de way he preached, he didn't git around amongst de ladies much. About de onliest time he seed de ladies much was on Sunday at de church, and dey was behavin' deyse'ves den, so he didn't never git up to de p'int er marryin' one of 'em.

So one day Brother Boaz had a tawk wid de Lawd about de womenfo'ks.

"Lawd," he say, "I'm gittin' mighty tired er

The Widow Woman Named Ruth

gittin' up before day ev'y mawnin' and cookin' my own breakfast, and den eatin' a cold snack at dinner time, and den comin' in after sundown and cookin' my own supper."

"I knowed hit," say de Lawd. "I knowed you'd git a woman on yo' mind de fust thing I knows."

"Well, Lawd," say Boaz, "you take dat gal, Della, now. De Widder Rucker's Della. She sets up in de front row ev'y Sunday and amens me to de cows come home."

"You let Della alone," say de Lawd. "Jest let dat gal alone."

"But, Lawd," say Boaz, "I was gonter marry her wid a pair er licenses and ev'ything. I knows you ain't ag'in' fo'ks gittin' married."

"Let dat gal alone," say de Lawd. "I picked you out to preach my Word 'cause you works hard and preaches hard and didn't had no time to run around wid de womenfo'ks. 'Cause you take a preacher when he gits a woman on his mind and a run-around on his heels, and he might jest as well quit preachin'. Cou'se, I don't say I'm ag'in' marryin', but I do say you better let dat Della gal alone."

"Well, Lawd," say Boaz, "you de he-coon and I'm gonter do what you got in yo' mind for me

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to do. But I wisht you'd tell me what you got in yo' mind."

"No mind," say de Lawd. "You'll find out what I got in my mind, and I better not ketch you gittin' sweet at dat Della gal, too."

"I bet I know," say Boaz. "I bet you got in yo' mind dat 'long as I don't git married up, all de young gals'll come to church ev'y Sunday, and quick as I gits married, well all de gals which I don't marry will git jealous and won't come no more."

"You's purty smart, Boaz," say de Lawd. "Purty smart."

So Boaz he jest preached on Sunday and worked in his field endurin' de week. To finally hit got time to pick cotton and Boaz hired him some hands to he'p wid de pickin'.

"I ain't gonter hire me nothin' but womenfo'ks," he say, "'cause de womenfo'ks likes me so good."

So he sont out de word dat all de ladies which wanted to c'd come and pick cotton at four bits a hund'ed. And de womens comed f'm mighty nigh ev'ywheres.

Well, amongst de yuther womens which comed to pick cotton was a young widder woman

The Widow Woman Named Ruth

named Ruth. So Boaz was out in de field, joshin' de hands along, and passin' remarks and makin' jokes, and he seed Ruth.

"Hy-dy, sister," he say. "I b'lieve you's a stranger in dis end er de county, ain't you?"

"Yeah," say Ruth. "I comed f'm Crockett County, 'cause I didn't had me no luck on dat side er de river. De fust thing I done, I got married. And I didn't hardly no quicker git, to my husband up and died on me. And you knows how hit is wid a ugly old widder woman like me when her husband dies."

"You might be a widder woman, gal," say Boaz. "But efn you's ugly, well, I'm plum blind in one eye and can't see outn de yuther."

"Well, maybe so," say Ruth, "but I'm kinder old."

"Shucks!" say Boaz. "I bet you ain't a day over twenty!"

"I swear!" say Ruth. "How'd you know dat's how old I am? I bet you standin' up hyar readin' my mind! You better git on away f'm me efn you kin read my mind, 'cause I'm a nice gal and you might find out somethin' which I don't aim for you to know."

"Well," say Boaz, "I'll see you at dinner time,

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maybe." So he went on about de field, jokin' and jawin' wid de womenfo'ks.

"I bet efn de Lawd knowed I was passin' remarks wid dat good-lookin' widder woman," he say, "well, I bet he'd be powerful mad, 'cause sposin' I up and married her, I bet ev'y lastin' one er de young gals'd quit church!"

So when dinner time come, Ruth she up and fixed hit so she'd be settin' by Boaz so she c'd tawk some more. "Boaz," she say, "I know you got plenty er money and don't keer how much skippin' de pickers does in de field. But hit's one gal out yonder name Della which skips more cotton on her row den she puts in her basket. Hit keeps me humpin' to pick my row and den clean up hern."

"Della hadn't ought to do like dat," say Boaz.

"You can't blame Della," say Ruth. "She ain't nothin' but a young gal, and she don't know she's wastin' yo' money when she's wastin' yo' cotton. You take me, now. I knows better, 'cause my husband which died, well, he learnt me. But hit sho tuck him a long time."

"Yo' husband learnt you dat, hunh?" say Boaz.

"Yeah," say Ruth. "De fust thing a good husband got to learn a gal quick as he marries up

The Widow Woman Named Ruth

wid her is how to save his money. And hit takes a long time, too. Me? I learns quick, but I wasted mighty nigh all er my husband's money before he got me learnt."

"Is dat a fack?" say Boaz. "Well, I swear! Woman, you ain't thinkin' about gittin' married again, is you?"

"I swear!" say Ruth. "Dar you go readin' my mind again! You better be careful how you do dat. You's liable to vex me."

"Dat's awright, baby," say Boaz. "What you say ——" But he stopped right quick, 'cause he was fixin' to ax Ruth to marry wid him, and he got skeered de Lawd wouldn't like hit.

"What I say about which, handsome?" say Ruth.

"I'm a preacher ——"

"I likes preachers," say Ruth.

"Well," say Boaz, "dat's how come I can't git married up wid nobody. De Lawd skeered de gals'd git jealous."

"Humph!" say Ruth. "Is dat so? I bet won't nobody have you. Pass de cabbages."

Well, when ev'ybody got done eatin' dey went back to work again. Den 'long when de sun got about two hours high, de clouds comed up and

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hit thundered and lightnin'ed and went on, and before anybody knowed hit, she started to rain. And when de rain started, ev'ybody scattered for de house and sot around to wait to she quit.

So, 'long about sundown hit quit rainin', and ev'ybody sa'ntered off twarge home. But Ruth she didn't. She jest sot.

Well, Brother Boaz got out and chopped some wood and slopped de hawgs and milked de cows and toted in de water, and done about. And when he got done he come on back in de house and found Ruth in de kitchen wid supper mighty nigh done.

"Supper'll be ready in a minute, Boaz," she say. "Jest quick as I kin git dis skillet hot for de hoecakes."

"Gonter cook hoecakes, hunh?" say Boaz. "I likes hoecakes."

"Maybe I done wrong den," say Ruth. "I tuck and put some cracklin's in de batter ——"

"Cracklin's!" say Boaz. "Lawd! gal, I ain't had me no cracklin' bread since I don't know when!"

So Ruth fixed his supper and fed him to he was about to bust. And den dey set around and

The Widow Woman Named Ruth

tawked, and Boaz he read outn de Bible at her, and fust thing you know dey bofe got sleepy.

"Well," say Boaz, "de weather is kind er cleared up. Maybe you kin find yo' way home now, gal."

"I'm too skeered," say Ruth. "I lives plum in Crockett County, and I'd got to cross dat Forky Deer bottom. I might stumble and fall and git drowned."

"Maybe," say Boaz, "I better go 'long wid you?"

"Nun-unh!" say Ruth. "Us bofe might fall in."

"Looky hyar, gal," say Boaz. "I know what you got in yo' mind, all right. But you ain't gonter stay all night in dis house, 'cause I'm a preacher and us ain't married. Now git yo' bonnet and come on. I'm gonter take you home!"

So Ruth she whimpered and got her bonnet. But about de time Boaz opened de door de light-nin' clove de sky, and de yearth rumbled, and de rain rained harder den hit had done since de flood!

"Wait a minute!" say Boaz. "Dis ain't gonter do. Git back in de house and let me study and think."

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So Boaz he sot and wearied and wearied, and Ruth she whimpered and sniveled.

"You's too purty to cry, gal," say Boaz. "I been likin' you ev'y since I sot eyes on you."

"Aw, go on," say Ruth. "Dat jest de way you handsome mens do. You jest vexes a gal to she don't know her mind."

"And when you cooked dat cracklin' bread," say Boaz, "I says to myse'f right den, I says, 'Efn I had a pair er licenses, I'd marry dat good-lookin' thing right now, and argy about hit to de Lawd after I got you married.'"

"You said dat, hunh?" say Ruth.

"Yeah," say Boaz. "And 'scusin' how hit'd be a sin to let you stay hyar all night when I ain't married, I'd marry you right now efn I had some licenses."

"You'd do dat, hunh?" say Ruth.

"Yeah," say Boaz. "But I ain't got no licenses."

"Well," say Ruth, "I got a pair!" And she reached in her bosom and pulled out a pair. "My husband paid three dollars and four bits for dis pair," she say, "and us didn't git to use 'em hardly none. Dey's jest as good as brand new!"

"Well, I be dad blame!" say Boaz. "Well, line up, baby, whilst I marries me and you up."

The Widow Woman Named Ruth

So Ruth she lined up and Boaz started de ceremony. "Doggone ev'ything I kin think about!" he say. "Us got to have a witness!"

"I be de witness!" Hit was de Lawd which stepped up and said dat. "Now y'all go on and git dis marriage done. I thought I'd never git old Boaz married! I swear! I had to make hit rain twice before I c'd git dat through his haid."

"You made dat rain, Lawd?" say Boaz. "I thought you was ag'in' me gittin' married."

"Dat's what you thought," say de Lawd. "But hit wa'n't what I had in my mind. I didn't want you to marry dat nobody gal, Della, 'cause she wa'n't nobody. I wanted you to marry a gal like Ruth, 'cause f'm what I got in my mind y'all is gonter be somebody's great-granddaddy. Now go on and marry dat gal and quit argyin' wid me. I got some business to look out after!"



Good-looking Esther

WHEN de Lawd makes up his mind to snag a sinner, well, de sinner might jest as well had holler "ca'f rope," 'cause de Lawd is as good as got him. And de Lawd tuck and made up his mind he was gonter revive some er de sinners over in Bald'in County.

"Mordecai," say de Lawd, "you ain't snagged me a sinner in Bald'in in I don't know how 'long."

"I preaches at 'em, Lawd," say Mordecai, "but hit don't do no good, 'cause even de king is a sinner."

Good-looking Esther

"Whyn't you start in on de king?" say de Lawd.

"I tried him," say Mordecai, "but he ain't intrusted. 'Give me a good-lookin' woman,' dis king say, 'and you kin have heaven.' And what I'm tawkin' about, Lawd, he got him a good-lookin' woman, too."

"Is dat a fack?" say de Lawd. "Well, well! So he got him a good-lookin' woman, hunh? Well, well!"

"You might plague him," say Mordecai. "You might slap a bile ——"

"How's de old lady and de gal—what's her name?—gittin' along?" say de Lawd, jest like he ain't intrusted in nothin' about Bald'in.

"Esther," say Mordecai. "Dat's her name. Dey's fairly middlin'. Jest middlin'. De old lady got her phthisic dis summer ——"

"And Esther?"

"Ain't nothin' de matter wid dat gal," say Mordecai. "She's jest as fat and sassy as de next one. Only thing, she kinder got her haid sot on bein' growed up. Tries to ack like a grown woman and go on."

"She's old enough to ack like a grown woman," say de Lawd.

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"And big enough," say Mordecai. "But I can't git my mind set dat she's growed up. She jest still is de purty little gal you used to trot on yo' knee."

So dat was on a Chuesday. So on Sadday de Lawd went over to Bald'in County.

Well, he stood around de court-house, watchin' all de sin and carryin'-ons, to fust thing you know hyar come a man down de road, a-whoopin' and a-hollerin' and a-shootin' and a-cussin'. So dey tuck and had him arrested and brang him before de king.

"You makin' too much racket," say de king.

"I'm drunk," say de man.

"I don't keer how drunk you gits," say de king. "I ain't gonter put up wid dat racket. I'm gonter give you six months on de chain gang."

"But, Yo' Majesty," say de man, "I works on yo' farm, and efn I goes to de chain gang de grass'll choke up yo' cotton."

"Dat's a shame," say de king. "Whyn't you tell me before I gived you dem six months?"

"Well, can't you change hit?" say de man.

"Nawp," say de king. "I never changes my mind. When I passes me a law, well, hit stays

Good-looking Esther

passed. I said six months, and six months hit is, even efn de grass gits ten foot tall."

Well, de Lawd wawked about town to after supper time, and den he went over to de king's house.

"Come in, Lawd," say de king. "How's ev'y-thing over yo' way?"

"Mighty good," say de Lawd. "And you?"

"All o.k. wid me, Lawd," say de king.

"Well, I'm glad to hyar dat," say de Lawd. "Mighty glad."

"You mean dat, sho'nuff?" say de king.

"For a fack," say de Lawd. "Why?"

"Well," say de king, "hit sounds funny for you to be wishin' me good luck, 'cause I ain't on yo' side. And f'm what Satan tells me, you's powerful particular about who you wishes good luck."

"When I sees a good man," say de Lawd, "I don't keer whose side he's on, I wishes him good luck."

"Satan say ——"

"Dat," say de Lawd, "is one er Satan's weak p'int. He jest can't he'p lyin' a little about me. Outside er his lyin' ——"

"I guess," say de king, "mighty nigh ev'ybody

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got his weak p'int. You take me, now, I got a heap er sense, but I'm a plum fool when hit comes to a good-lookin' woman. When I got married I jest couldn't stand to marry nobody but de best-lookin' gal in de country."

"Is dat a fack?" say de Lawd. "I didn't know you married Esther."

"Esther who?" say de king. "My queen ain't named Esther."

"You said she was de best-lookin' gal in de country," say de Lawd.

"She is," say de king, "but her name ain't Esther."

"Well," say de Lawd, "I used to have a mighty good eye for pickin' out good-lookin' gals, and f'm de way I sees things, Esther is jue to be about de purtiest gal in de country. Cou'se, I ain't never seed de gal you married up wid."

"Well," say de king, "before you pass jedgment you'd better take a look at her." So he called de queen. "You Queen!" he say, "come out hyar and let de Lawd look at how purty you is."

"Wait a minute," say de queen.

Well, er cou'se de king ain't gonter put up wid dat kind er tawk f'm no woman, and specially when hit's company like de Lawd around.

Good-looking Esther

So he got mad and put on his crown. "Don't you back tawk me, gal!" he say. "I'm de king, and when I holler, all you got to do is hop. Now efn you don't come on out hyar right now, well, I'm gonter divo'ce you right in front er company! And dat's a pyore law I'm passin' on you, too!"

So de queen she sniffled and whimpered and say, "Well, Yo' Majesty, I'm divo'ced, 'cause I can't come out right now, 'cause I'm naked as a jaybird, a-settin' hyar in de tub, a-takin' my bath."

So de king looked at de Lawd, and de Lawd looked at de king.

"Well," say de king, "I done pyore played hell, now, ain't I, Lawd?"

"Onless," say de Lawd, "you changes yo' mind, you is."

"I can't change my mind," say de king.

"Well," say de Lawd, "hit look like you did, 'cause you's a man which loves a good-lookin' woman, and no quicker did you git one to you up and divo'ced her. Well, maybe you won't git too lonesome, after you gits used to bein' a single man."

"Lawd," say de king, "didn't you tell me somethin' about a gal named Esther?"

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"Aw yeah," say de Lawd. "I had done most forgot Esther. Yeah, she lives over 'cross de river."

"You say she's good-lookin'?" say de king.

"Well," say de Lawd, "hit all depends on what you call good-lookin'. She's one er dese kind er medium-big gals wid long laigs and a pleasant way. Sort er slick skinned wid a weavin' wawk. Soople in de j'int, and as full er sass as a 'possum ought to be wid taters. But she's a good gal. De reason she wears a red ribbon in her haid is 'cause she ain't hardly mo'n a grown woman yit and don't know no better. I think she's purty, but er cou'se she might be too young and sassy for you."

So de king he fidgted about some and den he say, "Lawd, don't you reckon I and you could sort er sa'nter over 'cross de river tonight and kind er drap in and pass de time er day wid dat gal?"

"I reckon so," say de Lawd, "efn you's in-trusted. But onderstand, she might be too young and fast-tawkin' for you."

So de Lawd and de king sa'ntered over to Mordecai's house and give him and his old lady "hy-dy." And den de king looked and seed Esther!

Good-looking Esther

"Yo' name is Esther, ain't hit?" say de king.

"Dat's what dey calls me," say Esther.

"I knowed hit!" say de king. "Quick as I laid eyes on you I said, 'Yonder's dat good-lookin' gal de Lawd is been tellin' me about.' And I be dog-gone efn hit wa'n't!"

"Aw, go on, Yo' Majesty!" say Esther. "A sweet-tawkin' king like you hadn't ought to do me like dat, 'cause you's liable to change my mind!"

"I wisht I could change yo' mind, baby," say de king. "What you say I and you gits married up?"

"Nawsuh," say Esther. "You's a sinner, and I'd be skeered to marry a sinner, 'cause sposin' you got drunk and comed home and whapped me?"

"Aw naw," say de king. "I ain't no drinkin' man. And I wouldn't whup a purty thing like you even efn I was crazy drunk. Come on and le's git married."

"I'm too skeered," say Esther. "Efn you wa'n't no sinner I might."

"Doggone de luck," say de king. "What must I do, Lawd? You got me in dis, and you might

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jest as well git me out. I'm pyore crazy to marry dat purty gal."

"Well," say de Lawd, "I ain't de kind er man to go out and beg fo'ks to jine my church. But efn you's dead sot on marryin' her, old Mordecai kin preach to you and Esther kin he'p you moan and pray, and I'll stand hyar so's I kin tetch you quick as you gits revived wid de Sperit."

So Mordecai preached and Esther moaned and de king got down on de floor and graveled. And hit wa'n't long to de Sperit hit de king and he let out a yell, and de Lawd reached over and claimed him.

"Does yo' good-lookin' Majesty still want to marry me?" say Esther.

"Line up hyar wid me, baby," say de king, "and I'll show you."

So dey lined up and old Mordecai said de Word on 'em. "Now when y'all git back over in Bald'in County," say Mordecai, "watch out and don't backslide, 'cause Bald'in is plum full er sinners."

"Hit might be now," say de king, "but hit won't be long. I'm aimin' to pass a ——"

"Watch out, King," say de Lawd. "Better go easy on yo' law-passin', now, 'cause you know what happened once when you passed a law."

Good-looking Esther

"Dat's right," say de king. "But all de same, hit won't be no fun bein' king wid me and Esther de onliest members, and all de yuther fo'ks runnin' around, sinnin' and carryin' on."

"Whyn't you preach at 'em?" say de Lawd.

"I don't know how," say de king. "But efn you'll let Mordecai come over and learn me ——"

"Well," say de Lawd, "efn dat's de way you feel about hit, I reckon I kin loan you Mordecai to about cotton-pickin' time."

So when Esther and de king left, old Mordecai turned to de Lawd. "Dar, now," he say, "he's axin' me to learn him how to preach now, and de last time he seed me he was offerin' to put me in jail for preachin'. Lawd, how did you do dat?"

"I got my own way er doin' things," say de Lawd. "And efn I told you ev'ything I know, well, den you'd know as much as me. But de next time you goes fishin' for buffalo fish, don't try to ketch him wid a worm. And likewise, don't try to ketch no catfish wid cawnmeal. A good fisherman knows what kind er bait to use, I don't keer is he fishin' for fish or is he fishin' for sinners. You got to use de right kind er bait on 'em."



The Regeneration of Baldwin County

HIT was two kinds of sinners over in Bald'in County. Hit was sinners which was sinners jest 'cause dey ain't j'ined de church. Like de king was a sinner before he married up wid Esther. And hit was sinners which was pyore, low-down, snake-in-de-grassin' sinners which had jest as soon kill you as look at you. And dat's de kind er sinner old Haman was.

"But a sinner is a sinner to me, Mordecai," say de Lawd, "and I jest natchally can't stand a sinner."

"Me and you bofe, Lawd," say Mordecai. "I'm sick and tired er dem sinners over in Bald'in same as you. But, Lawd, dem sinners is got me

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mixed up four ways f'm Sunday. I preaches to 'em, but about de time things had ought er be gittin' hot, dem sinners gits up and leave me and go out to make licker or steal, or stuff like dat."

"Well," say de Lawd, "I don't expect you to be as smart as me. But I do speck ev'y man to know somethin' about a mule."

"I knows somethin' about a mule," say Mordecai.

"Well," say de Lawd, "I'm gonter ax you. Efn a mule balk on you, what do you do?"

"Well," say Mordecai, "I most gene'lly cusses a little bit, and den whups him sore."

"Dat's right," say de Lawd, "but do hit do any good?"

"Not a lick," say Mordecai. "But I gene'lly does hit, onless I'm in a hurry. Cou'se efn I'm in a hurry, I jest go on like I don't keer efn de mule balk or no, and quick as he find out I don't keer, well, he quits balkin' and goes on like I want him to."

"A sinner," say de Lawd, "is jest like a mule. You been over in Bald'in, cussin' and beatin' dem sinners wid yo' preachin', but you ain't gittin' nowhars."

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"Aw yeah," say Mordecai. "You wants me to set down and wait 'em out?"

"Dat's de way you got to handle 'em," say de Lawd.

"Maybe," say Mordecai. "But, Lawd, hit's a man over dar name Haman which nothin' shawt er pyore hangin' gonter do no good."

"Well?" say de Lawd.

"Can't hang him," say Mordecai. "He de sheriff, and hit's ag'in' de law to hang de sheriff."

"Well," say de Lawd, "don't you go breakin' de law, Mordecai. But you 'members when I sot out to snag de king? Well, I had to make him marry Esther to git him to jine de church, and he already had a wife, too. But I snagged him. Any time a man git in love wid Esther ——"

"But, Lawd," say Mordecai, "Esther is married now, and hit ain't nice for no gal ——"

"I ain't sayin' hit ain't," say de Lawd. "What I'm sayin' is dis: I'm sayin' I'm sick and tired er de sin and stuff dat's goin' on over in Bald'in County, and I'm countin' on you to revive 'em."

So Mordecai struck out for Bald'in. And he didn't hardly git across de river to he seed a sinner over behind a stump a-makin' licker in a two-

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gallon can wid a quile on de spout and a pine-knot fire underneath.

"Hello, brother!" say Mordecai. "Makin' a little drinkin' licker?"

"Little is right," say de sinner. "And be de time I splits wid de sheriff I won't have enough left to season my stomach wid."

"Got to split wid de sheriff, hunh?"

"Yeah. Or else go to jail. Ev'y since old Haman been de sheriff, ev'ybody got to split. You make licker, he gits half. You take a chicken, he gits half. You lift a shoat outn somebody's pen, and he gits half. Or else you goes to jail and git hung."

"Hmmm," say Mordecai. "Dat's hard. Whyn't you make yo' licker in a ten-gallon can instid er a two-gallon can?"

"Not me," say de sinner. "Dem big cans busts before you knows hit. Dese little'n's kind er breathe a couple er times before dey busts and you kin git outn de way."

"Dat's awright," say Mordecai. "Hit won't do nothin' but scald you, and you don't mind dat, does you?"

"Cou'se I does," say de sinner. "Scaldin' burns."

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"I knowed hit burnt," say Mordecai. "But I didn't think a sinner keered efn he got burnt."

"What put dat notion in yo' haid?" say de sinner. "Don't you keer efn you gits burnt?"

"Me? Yeah," say Mordecai. "And dat's how come I ain't no sinner. I jest can't stand to git burnt. But you's a sinner ——"

"I got feelin's same as you," say de sinner. "Hit hurts me too bad to git burnt."

"Well, well," say Mordecai, "is dat a fack? I didn't knowed dat. I allus thought hit didn't hurt a sinner to git burnt."

"What bein' a sinner got to do wid hit?"

"Nothin'," say Mordecai, "only all de sinners gits put down yonder in hell wid all dat broomstone and fire and stuff."

"Sho'nuff?" say de sinner. "Do broomstone burn?"

"Makes you pyore sizzle," say Mordecai. "Hotter'n a hickory-chunk fire."

"Well, I be dog," say de sinner. "I'm gonter quit bein' a sinner and jine de church, 'cause I jest can't stand to git burnt."

So Mordecai went along and he seed a man stealin' a shoat. "Hey-ho, neighbor!" he say. "Takin' a shoat?"

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"Yeah," say de man. "Sort er."

So Mordecai chinned him awhile, and den he kind er wiped de hot end er his cigar across de man's hand.

"Look out, man!" say de man. "Don't go burnin' me like dat!"

"Do dat burn?" say Mordecai.

"Hit's fire, ain't hit?" say de man.

"Aw, fire don't burn sinners, do hit?" say Mordecai. So dey argied, and Mordecai told him about how hot hell was, and de man put de shote back in de pen.

Well, things went along like dat, and fust thing you know old Haman hyared de news.

"Looky hyar, Mordecai," say Haman, "you's fixin' to git hung."

"Not me," say Mordecai, "I'll give you half er de members I gits."

"I ain't intrusted in members," say Haman, "and don't come none er dat fire trick on me, too, or I'll hang you right hyar. Since you been revivin' 'round hyar, I ain't been gittin' my half er nothin'. No licker, no chickens, no shotes, no nothin'."

"Well," say Mordecai, "is you intrusted in de womenfo'ks?"

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"Well," say Haman, "le's tawk about dat some."

So Mordecai told him he knowed a mighty good-lookin' gal, and he'd see efn he couldn't fix things up.

"You's tricky, Mordecai," say Haman, "and I bet you's aimin' to git me all messed up wid somebody."

"Who, me?" say Mordecai.

"Well, you better not try hit," say Haman. "'Cause whilst you's out fixin' hit up for me I'm gonter build me a brand-new pair er gallowses. And does you try to ju-ju me, up you goes."

"Sounds fair to me," say Mordecai. And he went off to see Esther.

"Daughter," he say, "how de king lovin' wid you by dis time?"

"Dat big scound'el is plum crazy about me," say Esther. "He loves me mighty nigh as good as I love him."

"Ain't he skeered somebody come along and try to change yo' mind?" say Mordecai.

"And git hung?" say Esther. "'Cause efn de king kotched anybody makin' sweet tawk at me, he'd git hung on de spot."

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"But s'posin' de king didn't find hit out?" say Mordecai.

"Don't s'posin' nothin' foolish," say Esther, "'cause I'd tell him on de fust man which looked goggle-eyed at me."

"Well," say Mordecai, "dat's de way I likes to hyar a married woman ack. I'm glad you turned out to be a nice gal."

So Mordecai went on back and told old Haman hit was fixed up. "But she kind er proud and sassy," say Mordecai. "You got to handle her."

"Dat's de onliest kind I likes," say Haman. "You jest watch me."

So Haman he went to Esther and say: "Hydy, baby! Whyn't you quit dat old husband er yo'n and take up wid a good man like me?"

"What you tryin' to do, country boy?" say Esther. "You ain't tryin' to sweet-tawk me, is you? I don't know you."

"Don't start none er dat stuff wid old Haman, baby," he say. "Ev'ybody knows me. Now come on hyar and give me a sweet kiss, 'cause I got to go down and see another woman ——"

"Yeah?" say Esther. "Jest stand hyar to I gits back, and I give you a sweet kiss." So she went and called de king.

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"He tried to sweet-tawk me, King," she say.

"Well," say de king, "don't tell me; tell Haman, so's he kin hang him."

"But he's Haman hisse'f," say Esther.

"Well, baby," say de king, "you wait hyar whilst I go hang him."

"You can't hang me, Yo' Majesty," say Haman, "'cause I'm de sheriff and hit's ag'in' de law to hang de sheriff."

"Well, I be dog!" say de king. "You ought to be hung. But I can't break my own law."

So about dat time old Mordecai comed up. "Long may you wave, Yo' Majesty," he say. "What's dis argyment all about?"

So de king told Mordecai all about how he wanted to hang Haman and couldn't 'cause hit was ag'in' de law.

"Well," say Mordecai, "I got a idee. Cou'se hit might not be no good, but efn hit ain't you kin pour hit back in de jug."

"What's de idee?" say de king.

"Well," say Mordecai, "you take and tie a rope around Haman's neck and drop him offn de gallowses ——"

"But hit's ag'in' de law to hang me," say Haman. "I'm de sheriff."

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"Well," say Mordecai, "efn de rope breaks, you wouldn't git hung."

"Naw," say Haman, "but s'posin' dat rope didn't break?"

"Well," say Mordecai, "in case de rope didn't break, hit'll be too late for you to weary yo' mind about hit."

"Dat sounds fair enough," say de king. "And tell de boys to use a new three-quarter grass rope and wound hit around wid balin' wire so hit won't break. And, Mordecai, in case hit don't break, well, I'm gonter name you de sheriff!"



The Tentacles of Sin

WELL, de Lawd ain't de kind er man which goes about huntin' things he don't like jest so's he kin git mad. He likes for his chillun to have as much fun as anybody. But he's ag'in' sin.

"I jest can't put up wid sin," say de Lawd. "I likes for my people to pleasure around, but I don't like sin. Dat's how come I loved old King David so good. David was as lively as de next one. He done his kingin' all right, but when he was good-timin' he was as peart as a widdler woman at a fish fry."

"Yeah," say de people, "but David done sin, too."

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"Well," say de Lawd, "he did. And I'm ag'in' sin, jest like I say. But David had his p'int. He was a fool about de women, all right. But ev'y time he vexed a woman, well, he married her."

"Yeah," say de people, "and he had nine wives, too. And dat's a sin."

"And a shame, too," say de Lawd, "but y'all don't onderstand old King David like I do. Now you take dat sin he done wid Miz Uriah. Hit was a pyore sin, and I'm ag'in' hit four ways f'm Sunday. But David was a man and he was made outn meat. And Miz Uriah was a good-lookin' gal when she had her clothes on, even. But when she got naked out on dat porch—well, de flesh is mighty weak, and David was kind er fleshy."

"You likes old King David, don't you, Lawd?"

"I do," say de Lawd, "cause he was de best king I ever had. But I ain't tawkin' about David; I'm tawkin' about sin. A heap er times I kin shet my eyes and look de yuther way when fo'ks is pleasurin' about. But I'm ag'in' sin, cause sin is bad. And I ain't sayin' sin is bad jest 'cause I'm ag'in' hit, too. Hit's bad 'cause hit's bad. Anybody kin do a sin but I'm de onliest man which kin ondo one. Even when David married dat gal,

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he didn't ondo de sin. 'Cause look at dat boy Solomon!"

Well, de people set back to watch what was gonter happen 'cause David done dat sin. So de fust thing which happened, old King David up and died.

"Dat ain't nothin'," say de people. "Ev'ybody got to die, sin or no."

So about dat time Solomon got up and allowed he gonter be king.

"Dat's awright," say de people. "Somebody got to be de king and Solomon is old King David's smartest boy."

"And Miz Uriah's boy, too," say de Lawd. "Don't forgit dat."

So Solomon started kingin' up and down de road, a-bowin' and tippin' his crown to de ladies and makin' riddles at de menfo'ks, and he was a mighty good king.

"Kind er like his old daddy," say de people. "David was heavy on socializin'."

"Y'all ain't seed nothin' yit," say Solomon. "Jest watch me."

And he started runnin' around wid de womenfo'ks!

Well, dat kind er stuff costes money, so to

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keep f'm gittin' in debt, Solomon kind er raised de taxes a little. But de people didn't mind dat much. "His old daddy was a fool about de women," say de people. "He had nine wives."

"Yeah?" say Solomon. "Well, jest watch me!" And de fust thing de people knowed old Solomon had not only had done married nine wives, but he had married nine hund'ed and ninety-nine!

And dat did cost money! And de taxes went away up yonder. And de men started in to grumble. But de women kind er liked dat marryin' style, 'cause didn't no gal know when she gonter wake up and find herse'f married up to de king. So as long as de womenfo'ks liked hit, all de men could do was dig down and pay dem taxes.

So finally old Solomon hauled off and died.

So de people got together and picked out one er Solomon's boys named Rehoboam for de king.

"But," say de people, "we wants a king."

"Dat's me," say Rehoboam.

"But we don't want no fancy stuff," say de people. "We's sick and tired er all dis fancy stuff 'cause hit costes too much."

"You don't think I'm gonter set down and king all day and night, too, does you?" say Rehoboam.

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"Well," say de people, "we ain't ag'in' a man pleasurin' hisse'f some ev'y now and den. You kin knock off on Sadday evenin' like ev'ybody else, and go fishin'."

"I don't like to fish," say Rehoboam.

"Well," say de people, "you kin git a dog and go huntin'."

"I don't like a dog," say Rehoboam, "and I don't like to hunt."

"Or," say de people, "you might git married ——"

"Now you's shoutin'," say Rehoboam. "Le's stand hyar and tawk about gittin' married some. 'Cause dat's what I aims to do."

"Git married one time," say de people.

"Yeah?" say de king. "Dat's all? Well, jest listen at me whilst I tells you some news. My old granddaddy had him nine wives, didn't he? And my daddy had nine hund'ed and ninety-nine, didn't he? Now some er y'all boys which is smart in de figgers git a pencil and set down and figger how many times I'm aimin' to git married!"

Well, dat started some argyment, 'cause de menfo'ks say he wa'n't to git married but one time and de womenfo'ks allowed hit wa'n't right

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to do de king like dat, and de argyment got to gittin' kind er hot.

So de deacon got up and resolved to call de committee and axed de king to step outn de church to de matter was settled.

Well, finally things got quiet and Rehoboam went back to see what had been done. And when he wawked in he seed another man settin' in de pulpit.

"How come?" say Rehoboam.

"Well," say de deacon, "hit look like things was workin' to a argyment in de church, and you know de Lawd ain't gonter put up wid no church argyment. So somebody got up and resolved dat hit was a man named Jeroboam over 'cross de creek which had a name dat sounded like yo'n, so why don't us make him de king and settle de argyment dat away and nobody would ever know de diffunce."

"So y'all is aimin' to make Jeroboam de king, hunh?" say Rehoboam.

"Ain't aimin' at nothin'," say Jeroboam. "Dey's done done hit."

"Who axed you, nothin'?" say Rehoboam.

"Call me My Majesty when you tawks to me," say Jeroboam.

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"Yeah?" say Rehoboam. "Well, I got a handle on my name, too. You better Majesty me a little when you tawks to me."

So de argyment started all over ag'in, and hit looked like a ruckus was gonter bust out in de church. So de Lawd wawked in.

"Well," say de Lawd, "what's de trouble?"

"Trouble erplenty, Lawd," say Rehoboam. "I was argyin' wid de committee about how many women I kin marry, and I stepped outside to let 'em settle de argyment, and when I come back I sees dis country boy settin' in de pulpit, allowin' I ain't de king no more."

"He's wrong," say de Lawd. "You is de king."

So Rehoboam turned to Jeroboam. "Now you see, nothin'," he say. "I'm de king. Not you."

"Whoa-p-p!" say de Lawd. "Not so fast. Did de fo'ks elect you king, Jeroboam?"

"By a risin' vote," say Jeroboam.

So de Lawd turned and spoke to de members. "Now you see dar," he say. "I told you sin was bad, didn't I? Away back yonder old King David done a sin, and I didn't ondo hit jest 'cause I wanted to show y'all how come I was so dead ag'in' sin. And now jest looky what happened! David had nine wives, and along come Solomon

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tryin' to outdo his daddy, and he had nine hund'ed and ninety-nine wives. Now hyar come Rehoboam, and I ain't got time to figger out how many wives he gonter have.

"Well, y'all didn't like dat did you? But you was too mulish to come and ax me to fix hit, 'cause you was ashamed to tell me I was right and y'all was wrong. Naw, you tried to fix hit yo'se'f. And now look! You found Rehoboam was gonter be too much king to suit yo' taste, so you got out and made you another king! So you got *two* kings now. And efn I knows anything about fo'ks, Jeroboam is gonter try to outdo Rehoboam, and Rehoboam is gonter try to outdo Solomon and Jeroboam, too. And all y'all got to do is pay de taxes!"

"We sho is in a mess," say de people. "Whyn't you straighten hit out, Lawd?"

"Nawp," say de Lawd. "Y'all knowed mo'n me. Y'all thought I said sin was bad jest 'cause I'm ag'in' sin. Y'all thought you could ondo a sin as good as me. Well, I'm gonter he'p you out, maybe, but not to you gits yo' bellyful er dis mess you got into. And I bet de next time I tell you somethin' you won't go disputin' me about hit!"



Elijah and the Meal Barrel

ABOUT de time you git to whar you figgers you don't need de Lawd to he'p you out, dat's about de time you needs him mostest. And about de time you think you's doin' somethin' de Lawd don't know nothin' about, dat's about de time de Lawd gonter fool you.

And dat is jest what happened to old Elijah!

Elijah was a preacher and he figgered he was gittin' along so good wid his preachin' dat he didn't need no he'p f'm nobody. He preached good and always had a big crowd to preachin', and de womenfo'ks was always invitin' him out to dinner and stuff, and ev'ything was goin' so

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easy dat he kind er passed de word he was doin' hit all and didn't need no he'p f'm de Lawd.

"Well," say de Lawd, "long as a man don't need me, I'm de last man in town to go buttin' in on his business."

But one day Elijah was up preachin' and he seed a good-lookin' widder woman come sa'n-terin' in de church and set down. So quick as he seed her he went back and give her de fellowship hand.

"Hy-dy, sister!" he say. "I's mighty glad to see you out tonight."

"Well," say de widder woman, "I'm a member and I allus makes hit a p'int to come to church. I jest moved in town, so I comed to church ——"

"Dat's right," say Elijah. "You didn't bring yo' husband along, I see?"

"Naw, I didn't," say de woman. "'Cause he's daid. Yancey got kilt up at Brown's Crossin'. He was a railroadin' man and got kotched betwixt de cyars. So I moved in town."

"So you's a widder woman, hunh?" say Elijah.

"And livin' by myse'f," say de woman, "over back er town."

So de tawk run on and by de time meetin' broke up, Elijah he told de widder woman dat,

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'scusin' how dark hit was, maybe he better go on and take her home. And dat's what he done. But he didn't git nowhars wid de widder woman dat night.

"Naw, I ain't wantin' to marry no man," say de widder woman. "I'm gonter live single and moan after Yancey."

Well, Elijah knowed how to take his time wid de womenfo'ks, so he jest kept right on preachin' and goin' to see de widder woman. But he didn't git nowhars.

"Woman," he say, "I'm kind er wastin' my time on you. Hyar I been keepin' company wid you for I don't know how long and us ain't got nowhar, hardly."

"Hardly?" say de woman. "Us ain't started. And dat ain't all."

Well, Elijah kept on preachin' and takin' his time, but de widder woman wearied his mind. He begged and begged her, but she wouldn't say nothin' but "Naw." So Elijah kind er figgered maybe he ought to git somebody to he'p him out wid her, and he didn't figger nobody c'd he'p him but de Lawd. "But I'm kind er ashame' to ax de Lawd to he'p me out wid my courtin'," he say. So he figgered and he figgered.

Elijah and the Meal Barrel

Den one day he hauled off and axed de Lawd to give him a dry spell.

"How come, Elijah?" say de Lawd.

"Well," say Elijah, "hit's a heap er sin goin' on around town. And ain't nothin' like a dry spell to he'p revive de sinners. You take a sinner in a dry spell, when he sees his crop burnin' up for dew and for rain, well, about de fust thing he gonger think about is dat de Lawd is gittin' after him for sinnin'."

"Well," say de Lawd, "hit's some sin goin' on. But hit's a lot of good stuff, too. But still, I ain't de kind er man to say naw when one er my preachers axes for he'p. How much dry weather you want?"

"Well," say Elijah, "hit's about de fust er May now. Sposin' you quit rainin' to about de Fou'th er July? Dat won't hurt de cotton much, but hit'll hit de cawn hard and git 'em to studyin'."

So dat's what de Lawd done, and old Elijah went right on wid his preachin' and his courtin'. But he had somethin' else which he was up to, too. He knowed all dat dry weather was gonger burn up de cawn. And he knowed hit'd be a mighty sca'ce lot er meal, dat fall, too, on account er nobody raisin' no cawn. So he backed

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off in de bottoms next to de river, and he planted him a little patch er ninety-day cawn.

Well, hit didn't rain on Elijah's cawn, but old Elijah got out ev'y night and toted water f'm de river to water his patch. And when fall come, old Elijah was de onliest man in dat neck er de woods which had cawn enough to grind into meal.

So one night he was over at de widder woman's house.

"How about us makin' some hoecakes in de ashes?" he say.

"I ain't got but a dab er meal," say de widder woman, "and I don't know whar I'd git any more efn I used dis up, 'cause hit's so sca'ce and credik is so tight at de store on account er de drou't'."

So Elijah looked in de meal bar'l. "You got plenty er meal to make me some hoecakes to-night, baby," he said.

"Yeah," she say, "but whar de next meal comin' f'm?"

"You ought to git you a man to weary about whar yo' meal is comin' f'm."

"Weary is right," say de woman. "'Cause hit's too dear to buy, and credik is too tight."

Elijah and the Meal Barrel

"I don't has to buy meal, gal," say Elijah. "You take and make me some hoecakes outn dat meal you got, and den jest watch old me rustle up enough for yo' breakfust."

So de woman made de hoecakes, and quick as she emptied de bar'l Elijah made a pass and done a lot er ju-ju tawk, like he's passin' a miracle, and when de woman wa'n't lookin', he tuck and poured a sack er meal in de bar'l which he brang over in his pocket. "I don't got to buy meal, gal," he say; "all I got to do is make hit!"

"Well, I swear!" say de woman, "ain't you a good'n'!"

"Aw, dat wa'n't hard for me to do," say Elijah. "I done dat wid my eyes shet."

So dey et up de hoecakes, and den de woman allows dey tastes like some more. "I ain't had me enough hoecakes since I don't know when," she say. "I b'lieve I'll make another batch."

"You better save dat meal you got for breakfust," say Elijah.

"Naw," say de woman. "I'm gonter use dis and let old big you make me some more meal for breakfust."

Well, dat kind er caught old Elijah whar his

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hair was shawt. 'Cause he didn't had no more meal in his pockets. So he started argyin'.

"You kin make me some more meal, big'n'," say de woman.

"Naw I can't, baby," say Elijah. "Not tonight. Tomorrow, maybe. But not tonight."

"Aw, go on, you big scound'el," say de woman. "You jest funnin' wid me to make me beg you. Dat's de way wid you mens. Quick as a gal gits to likin' you you got to make her beg for some-thin'. Come on, big'n', and make me some more meal."

So de woman went on and tuck de rest er de meal outn de bar'l and made some more hoecakes. "I knows my big old Elijah ain't gonter let me wake up wid a empty meal bar'l," she say. "Come on, purty stuff, and make old me some more meal."

"Well, I'm gonter try," say Elijah, "but I knows I can't." So he ju-jued and made passes to he got plum out er breath, but he couldn't make no more meal. "I'll make you some tomorrow, but not tonight," he say.

"How you expect a gal to marry a man," say de woman, "which can't make but one dab er meal a day?"

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"One dab," say Elijah, "is mo'n any yuther man in town kin make."

"Shuh!" say de woman. "I bet I kin do better'n dat."

"Well, le's see you," say Elijah.

So de woman went to de meal bar'l and she made a pass, and she say, "Let hit be some meal in dis bar'l!" And Elijah looked and de bar'l was full er meal!

"Dat's de way I makes meal," say de woman. "Now let hit be some meal in Elijah's shoes!" And his shoes was so full dat he had to take 'em off to dreene de meal out.

"I be doggone, woman!" say Elijah. "You's a case!"

"Let hit be some meal in Elijah's mouf," say de woman. And hit was so much meal in his mouf dat he come mighty nigh chokin'.

"Mind out dar, gal," he say. "Don't come none er dat stuff on me."

"Well, Elijah," say de woman, "is I'm a better meal-maker, or is you a better meal-maker?"

"You, baby," say Elijah. "You's awright. And you sho had me fooled, too. How do you do dat?"

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"You ain't de fust man I ever had fooled," say de woman. "And not de last'n', too." So she reached up and pulled off her dress, and she was de Lawd!

"Now you knows who you been messin' around, don't you, Elijah?" say de Lawd.

"Yas, Lawd," say Elijah.

"Well," say de Lawd, "I kind er figgered you'd know quick as you seed me. Now listen at me, Elijah. Quick as you got to de spot whar you figgered you didn't need me none, well, dat was jest de spot whar I had to take you in hand. 'Cause de blindest man in town is de man dat's got de best years and can't hear."

"And you was dat widder woman all de time, Lawd?" say Elijah.

"I was," say de Lawd. "And dat ain't all. I had my eyes on you all de time. Ev'y night when you was out totin' water to dat cawn-patch, tryin' to trick dat widder woman, well, you wa'n't trickin' nobody but yo'se'f!"

"Lawd," say Elijah, "I worked powerful hard totin' dat water, too."

"I know you did," say de Lawd. "'Cause you thought you was trickin' a widder woman. Now efn you gits out and works as hard for me as you

Elijah and the Meal Barrel

done for dat widder woman, well me and you gonter git along a heap better."

"I'm gonter work," say Elijah. "But I'm gonter need a heap er he'p f'm you, Lawd."

"You sho will," say de Lawd.



Saturday Afternoon Miracles

"ELIJAH," say de Lawd, "hit's a heap er sin and stuff goin' on in dis man's town. Hit look to me like you preachers ain't got no stuff on yo' preachin'."

"Don't blame we preachers, Lawd," say Elijah. "Hit's dat devilish king. Old King Ahab is so full er sin and stuff to he jest workin'."

"I ain't said nothin' about de king," say de Lawd. "I said hit was too much sin in dis town, and I can't stand sin."

"Yas, Lawd," say Elijah.

So de Lawd wawked on.

So Elijah sot down and thought and thought.

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"Hit's all on account er dat devilish Ahab," he say, "and de Lawd ain't offered me a lick er he'p." So he sot and thought some more, to finally he decided dat did he want to git anything done he better git his hat and do on his own hook.

So he struck out to find old King Ahab.

"Old King Ahab, long may you wave," say Elijah.

"Don't come none er dat stuff wid me, Elijah," say Ahab. "I got troubles er my own."

"Which is ——?" say Elijah.

"Dry weather," say King Ahab. "Hyar hit is crowdin' July and hit ain't rained since I don't know when. All de crops is burnin' up in de field and de springs is goin' dry, and efn hit don't haul off and rain purty quick, well, she looks like hard times around hyar dis next fall."

"Aw," say Elijah, "dat's all you want, hunh? Rain. Well, efn you done a little more prayin' and not so much sinnin', well, hit might rain."

"Humph!" say King Ahab. "Y'all preachers all tawks alike. Sin! Humph! Sin ain't got nothin' to do wid de weather. When she git ready to rain, well, she gonter rain, and when she don't git ready to rain she don't rain. And dat's all hit is to de weather. She rain or she don't."

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"Don't you reckon de Lawd might got a little to do wid de she rain or don't she?" say Elijah.

"Preacher tawk," say King Ahab.

"De Lawd flooded de yearth wid rain, didn't he?" say Elijah.

"Not since I kin remember," say King Ahab.

"But you hyared tell er old Norah and de ark, didn't you?"

"I hyared tell er a heap er things," say King Ahab. "But most er dat stuff sound like rye straw to me."

"Yeah?" say Elijah.

"Yeah," say King Ahab.

"S'posin'," say Elijah, "—jest s'posin' dat I prayed for rain and she rained?"

"Sposin' you prayed for fyer and she blazed?" say Ahab.

"Well," say Elijah, "s'posin' dat, too."

"You don't mean to say you kin pray down rain or fyer, accordin' to what you's prayin' for?" say Ahab. "Dat's as bad as dat yarn about old Norah and de ark."

"I ain't s'posin' I kin pray down rain *or* fyer," say Elijah. "I'm s'posin' I kin pray down rain *and* fyer."

"You ain't got hit in you," say King Ahab.

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"Maybe not," say Elijah, "but jest s'posin' I prays for rain and she hauls off and rains?"

"We needs rain," say Ahab, "and hit ain't no harm in tryin'. But I don't b'lieve you kin."

"Well," say Elijah, "s'posin' along about Saturday evenin' you up and declares a barbecue out on de hillside and axes ev'ybody to come. And s'posin' when yo' dar you tells de fo'ks dat I'm gonter try my hand at prayin' down fyer and rain. And tell 'em dat de bargain is dis: efn I prays down like I say, well, ev'ybody got to come to church de next day, and efn I don't, well, dar's de barbecue and de good time and no harm done."

"I been kind er honin' for a barbecue, anyhow," say Ahab. "And ef you wants to pray for fyer and rain, you kin go to hit. But all de same, I'm gonter bring some matches along to light dem chunks under de barbecue."

"And I'm gonter bring me a jug er water along to wet my th'oat in case she don't rain, too," say Elijah. "'Cause I ain't sayin' I kin, on-derstand; I'm jest sayin' I'm gonter mock de man which kin."

"Well," say Ahab, "de worst us gits outn hit

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is a good barbecue, one way or de yuther. See you Sadday."

Well, when Sadday come old Elijah tuck his jug and passed a rope through de handle and swang hit across his shoulder and lit out for de barbecue. When he got dar, de men had done dug a pit and filled hit wid kindlin' wood and hickory chunks and laid de spit-irons, and de ladies was slicin' up de lightbread and gabbin' amongst deyse'ves, and ev'ybody was waitin' to see old Elijah pray a few licks for de fyer!

"Stand back," say Elijah. "When I prays for fyer I got to r'ar way back."

So ev'ybody laughed at him. "You too old, granddaddy," dey say. "You got to be hot to pray down fyer, and you ain't hot." And dey laughed some more.

But Elijah didn't paid 'em no mind. He jest got on his knees and started spreadin' up and down, wavin' his hands and prayin': "O Lawd, a little fyer, please!" And he weaved away back and bowed way low. "O Lawd, one little blaze, please!" And about dat time he bunt way low and his jug fell offn his shoulder and rolled in de pit wid de stopper out!

"Yah, yah, yah!" say de fo'ks. "Prayin' for

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fiyer and gittin' water on de kindlin'! Yah, yah, yah!"

"Wait a minute," say Ahab. "Dat ain't right. Even a preacher got a right to have dry kindlin' wood to start a fyer wid, I don't keer is he tryin' to light hit wid matches or prayer."

"Nawp," say Elijah. "I spilt dat water outn my own keerlessness, and I lights dat fyer wet or I don't light hit. Now ev'ybody spread back and give me room, 'cause I got to r'ar way back!"

Well, suh, right whilst ev'ybody was spreadin' back dey looked and up jumped a blaze right outn dat wet wood!

"Spread back!" say Elijah. "Spread back and give hit a draft. Don't come too close to she's goin' good." And ev'ybody stood back whilst de fyer got to roarin' and blazin' in de pit.

"Now, jest quick as she burns to coals," say Elijah, "y'all kin put dat yearlin' on de spit-irons." So dey did, and ev'ybody swarmed about old Elijah, axin' him how he done hit, whilst dey was eatin' barbecue.

"Jest prayin'," say Elijah, "and keepin' away f'm sin. Go to church ev'y Sunday and keep outn devilment."

"Dat's mighty fine," say King Ahab, "but

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what us needs worse'n dat fyer was some rain. How 'bout dat rain you gonter pray down?"

"I axes for a little rain whilst I was prayin' for fyer," say Elijah, "and I see a mighty wet-lookin' cloud over yonder way. Maybe dat's de rain comin'."

And hit was! In less'n mighty nigh no time dat cloud drifted over and hit was a good shower fell.

"Well," say Elijah, "I'll see y'all to church tomorrer?"

"Look in de amen cornder and you'll sho see me," say Ahab.

So, sho'nuff, ev'ybody was at church and old Elijah poured de sin tawk at 'em to dey moaned and groaned. But quick as he got done, he looked up and dar stood de Lawd!

"Looky hyar, Elijah," say de Lawd, "what kind er stuff I hyars about dat barbecue?"

"Yeah, Lawd," say Elijah, "I prayed down a little fyer and rain ——"

"You whiched?" say de Lawd. "I'm de onliest man kin pass a miracle wid fyer and water around dis man's town, and I didn't had nothin' to do wid dat stuff yistiddy. What you been up to, suh?"

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"Well, Lawd," say Elijah, "I'm gonter tell you. You told me to preach to dese people, didn't you?"

"I did," say de Lawd.

"And how I'm gonter preach to 'em when I can't git 'em to come to preachin'?"

"You can't," say de Lawd.

"Well," say Elijah, "dat stuff yistiddy was done so's I c'd git 'em to church. Dat fyer was a trick, Lawd. Instid er puttin' water in my jug I put coal oil in hit, and when I had 'em all standin' back I up and tetched it off wid a match!"

"Yeah," say de Lawd. "I figgered dat fyer was a trick, some way or yuther, but hit wa'n't no trick in dat rain. Dat was a natchal rain, efn ever hit was one."

"Dat's de p'int, Lawd," say Elijah. "You see, she most gen'ally rains ev'y time anybody got a barbecue."

"Hit do, a lot," say de Lawd.

"And a heap er times she rains on Sadday evenin', too."

"I been noticin' dat, some," say de Lawd.

"But dat ain't all," say Elijah. "Don't you know what Sadday was?"

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"Sadday, I reckon," say de Lawd. "Hit was jue to be, anyhow."

"Hit was Sadday, all right, Lawd," say Elijah, "but dat ain't de startin'. Hit was de Fou'th er July, too! And, Lawd, you know good as me, you take a barbecue and Sadday evenin' and de Fou'th er July all at one lick, and she jest mighty nigh *bound* to rain!"

"Couldn't he'p rainin'," say de Lawd. "But you de fust preacher I ever had which got sense enough to figger all dat out. I didn't think you had hit in you."



The Parable of the Prodigal Son

WELL, they was a man and he had a projeckin' son. And efn dat boy wa'n't projeckin' wid one thing hit was two.

"I swear, Lawd," say de man, "I don't see what I'm gonter do wid dat boy. He's a pyore burden. Looky yonder at him now! . . . You, Chester! You quit twistin' dat ca'f's tail and come in dis house! I bet I'm gonter lay you out de next time I ketch you projeckin' wid dat ca'f!"

"Dat boy's all right," say de Lawd. "He jest got a little er de Old Harry in him. I wouldn't give a whoop for a boy which ain't lively."

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"Maybe you wouldn't, Lawd," say de man. "But you don't got to put up wid him all day long. All you got to do is jest burden him awhile on Sunday. But wid me hit's ev'y day and Sunday too. . . . You, Chester! You quit dat and commere! I bet I'm gonter cane you good!"

"Dat boy," say de Lawd, "ain't bad. I been watchin' him all de time."

"What you been watchin' him for, Lawd?" say de man.

"I been kind er figgerin'," say de Lawd, "dat I might make me a parable outn him some er dese days."

"Naw, Lawd," say de man. "He won't do for no parable. He too bad. I bet you got him mixed up wid his twin brother, Ro-chester. Ro-chester he'd make a mighty nice parable for you. He don't never git in no devilment. He jest sets around and minds what I say and be's a pyore joy to my soul. But dat Chester!"

"Nawp," say de Lawd, "Chester is de ve'y boy I'm had my eyes on. And efn he keeps on goin' like he goin', well he gonter turn out to be about de best parable you ever seed."

Well, things went along about de same. De man thought sho dat de Lawd had his eyes on

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Ro-chester instead er Chester, 'cause Ro-chester didn't do nothin' but set around and mind his daddy and Chester he jest spent most er his time projeckin' around wid some kind er devilment or yuther. And ev'y time Chester got to projeckin', well, Ro-chester would spread de news to de old man, and den Chester would git worked on wid a cane.

"I tawks to you to my tongue gits tied," say de man. "But, naw, hit takes a cane to make you listen. And den you don't."

"Hit's a heap er stuff I gits caned for," say Chester, "dat ain't none er my doin's."

"Yeah?" say de man. "Whose doin's is dey?"

"I don't know," say Chester, "but hit ain't none er mine."

"Now," say de man, "I'm is got to whup you. You ain't satisfied wid plaguin' dat ca'f and th'owin' rocks on de house, and chunkin' at de chickens, and stuff like dat. Now you got to go lyin' about hit. Drap dem pants!"

So things kept gittin' hotter and hotter for Chester, to finally he jest couldn't stand hit no longer. So he packed up a bundle and struck out for Arkansas.

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"Pappy," say Ro-chester, "Chester done runned off to Arkansas."

"Well," say de man, "you go and cut me about two canes, and I'll let 'em season up betwixt now and Sadday. He'll git hongry and come home about Sadday, and I'll work on him. I swear, dat boy burdens me hard."

But when Sadday come around Chester didn't git home, 'cause he had done got him a job mindin' de hawgs for a farmer up in Arkansas.

"You knows anything about hawgs, son?" say de farmer.

"Raised up wid 'em, mighty nigh," say Chester.

"Well," say de man, "yonder is de hawgs and yonder is de clover patch. Now see kin you git dem scound'els fat by hawg-killin' time."

"Whar de cawn crib?" say Chester, "'cause you got to give hawgs some cawn do you want to fatten 'em."

So de man seed Chester knowed what he was tawkin' about and he hired him for fawty dollars and board to de first big frost, jest to fatten up dem hawgs.

Well, back down home things was gittin' along kind er slow. Ev'y time Chester's daddy

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looked around he wouldn't see nobody mixed up in no devilment, and dat made him kind er lonesome. And dat yearlin' ca'f dat Chester had been chasin' jest stood around in de shade, and bawled and bellered like he wa'n't gittin' no fun outn life. And de cane got to growin' up so rank back er de gyarden dat you couldn't hardly git through de brake.

"I be dang!" say de man. "I don't know what's gittin' de matter wid me. I jest mopes about de house wid nothin' on my mind since dat devilish Chester runned off. Ro-chester, whyn't you quit settin' under my nose and git out and twist dat ca'f's tail and run him around de lot some. Dat ca'f gittin' so fat and lazy he can't hardly wawk."

"Nawsuh," say Ro-chester. "Hit ain't no good to twist de ca'f's tail, 'cause he ain't did me nothin'. But efn you want him run some, I'll run him. How far must I run him, daddy?"

"No mind," say de man. "Jest leave him alone."

"I kind er thought efn you didn't keer," say Ro-chester, "I might hitch de hawse and buggy up and drive over to Old Ship church to de meetin'."

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"And run dat hawse up and down de road, showin' off in front er de gals?" say de man.

"Nawsuh," say Ro-chester. "Hit ain't good to do dat. And I ain't runnin' around wid no gals, too. Dat's wrong and I won't do nothin' dat's wrong."

"Well," say de man, kind er sorry, "dat's right. You hadn't ought to do wrong. Dat's de way I'm raisin' you up. But doggone efn hit ain't kind er lonesome around here, and tiresome, too."

Well, de more de man sot and thunk, de lonesomer and tireder he got. And de lonesomer and tireder he got, de more dat ca'f would stand in de shade and look sad outn his eyes, and jest lay on de fat.

"Dat ca'f is pyore honin' for somebody to twist his tail," say de man, "and efn I didn't had a gimp in my laig I'd twist hit myse'f."

So he jest sot around, quiet and werrit. And Ro-chester he got gooder and gooder, and hit wa'n't nobody around de house to projeck wid devilment. Nobody would devil de ca'f, and nobody would chunk rocks at de chickens, and nobody would th'ow things on de house, and nobody wouldn't do nothin'. And dat's how bad

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things got when de first big frost come, and den up wawked de Lawd.

"Well, brother," say de Lawd, "you looks kind er down in de mouf today. Ro-chester must er tuck up projeckin' whar Chester left off."

"Naw, Lawd," say de man. "He ain't projecked a lick, and dat's de p'int. I kind er wish he would projeck a little."

"Missin' Chester, hunh?" say de Lawd.

"Awful," say de man. "Jest look how fat and lazy dat ca'f done got."

"Dat's quar," say de Lawd. "Hyar you had a projeckin' boy which werrit and vexed you sad, and hyar you had a boy which won't projeck and he pleased yo' soul. So you got shut er de projeckin' boy and kept de good boy, and now you's honin' for de projeckin' boy. How do you figger dat out?"

"I don't know how, Lawd," say de man, "but she figgers out jest like dat. I sho wish my projeckin' son would come home."

"Whyn't you send for him?" say de Lawd.

"Can't find him," say de man. "I looked all over ev'ywhar for him—in all de jails and all de chain-gang camps and at de poorhouse, and I can't find hair nor hide."

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"S'posin' he come struttin' up de road," say de Lawd, "wid a good suit er clothes and fawty dollars cash in his pockets?"

"Lawd, hit ain't no good to s'posin' like dat," say de man, "'cause dat boy won't steal. He was bad, all right, but he wa'n't no rogue. And I know ain't nobody gonter jest give him fawty dollars and a suit er clothes, 'cause he wa'n't worth dat much to nobody but me, maybe."

"Well," say de Lawd, "yonder he come wid de fawty dollars in his pockets and a good suit er clothes, and a Stutson hat, to boot."

So de man looked up, and sho'nuff, hyar come Chester, dressed jest like de Lawd say. So de man was kind er sorry. "Lawd, dat boy didn't turn out to be no rogue, sho'nuff, did he?" say de man. "I didn't think my boy was rogue enough to steal ——"

"Naw, he ain't no rogue," say de Lawd. "He worked for dat money and dem clothes. He ain't no rogue; he's a parable! A pyore parable!"

"Sho'nuff, Lawd!" say de man.

"Yeah," say de Lawd, "and dat ain't all. I want to see you quit mopin' about de house wid yo' lip draggin' de ground. And I want you to let dat boy alone, too. Hyar you been had a

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parable in yo' house, and jest 'cause he projeck about a little ev'y once in a while, you runned him off. And when you runned him off, you wa'n't satisfied wid what stayed behind. Now you treat dat boy right."

"Lawd, I'm gonter," say de man.

"Well, I want to see you treat him," say de Lawd. "And hit ain't no way start treatin' a boy right like a barbecue. I been seein' a fat lazy yearlin' around hyar lately, which looks like he's about right for barbecuin'. And I speck dat boy craves some barbecued ca'f, too. He been livin' on fresh hawg meat and cawnbread all summer. Now you git busy."

"Watch me, Lawd," say de man. "I knowed dat ca'f was gittin' fat for somethin' er yuther!"



Jonah and That Whale

WELL, they was a man named Brother Jonah, and Jonah was a man which liked to fish. So one day de Lawd told him, "Jonah," he say, "how you gittin' along dese days and times?"

"Jest middlin', Lawd," say Jonah. "Mighty nigh got de grass whupped outn my cotton, but my yams ain't doin' so good, and de old lady tells me de hens ain't laid a egg since she don't know when."

"I been had my eye on dem yams," say de Lawd, "and I been watchin' dem hens, too. And dat's de p'int. Hit's grasshoppers in dem 'taters, how come dey ain't doin' so good. And efn hit's anything which makes a hen lay eggs, well hit's

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grasshoppers which is fattened on sweet-'tater vines."

"Dat's a fack," say Jonah. "I and de old lady bofe knowed dat. But hens ain't de onliest things which likes fat grasshoppers."

"Naw?" say de Lawd. "Which else?"

"Fish," say Jonah. "You take a fat grasshopper and you put him on a fishin'-hook, and you take and drap him in de river, and, Lawd! all you got to do is shet yo' eyes and yank. De yuther day I was fishin' wid one er dem grasshoppers and I kotched ——"

"No mind what you kotched," say de Lawd. "I ain't got time to listen to no fishin' lies. I'm tawkin' business. I want you to hurry up and git yo' cotton worked out, and git dem hens turned in on dat 'tater-patch, 'cause I got a job for you to do."

"Lawd," say Jonah, "when I got all dat done, I was sort er countin' on doin' some fishin' ——"

"Yeah?" say de Lawd. "I better not ketch you fishin'. I been wawkin' about some in Bald'in County, and hit's more sinners and backsliders over in Bald'in den I kin shake a stick at. And what I got in my mind for you to do, quick as yo' crop is laid by, is dis: You gonter go over in

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Bald'in County and revive dem sinners and backsliders for me. And f'm de sin and stuff I seen goin' on, well, you won't have no time for fishin'. Hit'll keep you humpin' to cotton-pickin' time to git all dem sinners preached to."

Well, quick as Jonah got his crop all laid by and turned de hens in on de 'tater vines, he told his wife, he say, "Old lady, take and hand me my Bible and my specks. I'm gonter go over in Bald'in County and revive some sinners for de Lawd."

"I bet you got a fishin'-hook in yo' pocket, right now," say Miz Jonah. "I bet you aimin' to go fishin' and den come back and tell some old rusty lie about how many fish you kotched."

"Nawp," say Jonah. "I got de call straight f'm de Lawd. And you know me. When de Lawd calls, well, I answers. I ain't aimin' to do a lick er fishin' dis summer."

So Jonah got his Bible and his specks and started on down de road. But about de time he come to de river he seed a woman settin' on de bank a-fishin'. And dat made old Jonah mad. "Woman!" he say. "Don't you know hit's a pyore sin to do dat on Sunday?"

"I ain't seed nothin' in de Book ag'in' fishin'

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on Sunday," say de woman. "What do de Book say?"

So Jonah he opened up his Bible and read:

"Ain't it a shame to ketch a fish on Sunday!

Ain't it a shame, Lawd, sin and a shame!

Ain't it a shame to ketch a fish on Sunday!

Ain't it a shame, Lawd, sin and a shame!

When you got Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday,

Thursday, Friday, Saddiday, too,

Ain't it a shame to ketch a fish on Sunday!

Ain't it a shame, Lawd, sin and a shame!"

"Dat what de Book, say, hunh?" say de woman.

"You seed me readin' de word," say Jonah.

So de woman jest laughed. "Well," she say, "all I hyared was dat hit's a sin and a shame to ketch a fish on Sunday, and I ain't done no sin dis day! 'Cause I been fishin' all mawnin' and I ain't even got me a nibble yit, let alone ketched a fish."

"Dat's quar," say Jonah. "De river is good and low and de water is mighty clear. Dem catfish is jue to be bitin' fast along about now."

"Jue to be ain't bitin'," say de woman. "I ain't had a nibble."

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"What kind er bait you usin'?" say Jonah.

"Grasshoppers," say de woman.

"And de fish ain't bitin'?"

"I got a big fat'n' on my hook right now," say de woman, "and ain't nary a fish paid hit no mind."

"Well, I swear!" say Jonah. "Dem fish is jue to be bitin' at dem grasshoppers, or else I don't know nothin' about fishin'. Did you spit on dat grasshopper before you drapped him in?"

"Naw," say de woman. "Hit ain't nice for no woman to spit on no bait, and hit wa'n't no man around ——"

"Lemme see dat hook," say Jonah. And he tuck and pulled de line out and he spit on de hook and den he drapped her back in de river.

And no sooner did de hook hit de water den down she went! And when she went down, old Jonah yanked. And when he yanked, out come a yaller-bellied catfish as long as yo' arm. "Dat what de matter," he say. "Ain't no fish gonter bite onless you spit on de bait."

Well, Brother Jonah thought he was tawkin' to dat fishin'-woman when he said dat, but he wa'n't. He was tawkin' square to de Lawd!

Jonah and That Whale

"Is dat a fack?" say de Lawd.

"Lawd," say Jonah, "whar'd you come f'm?"

"No mind whar I comed f'm," say de Lawd.

"Hyar I'm is. And hyar you is. And a-fishin'! You know I told you to git over to Bald'in ——"

"Lawd," say Jonah, "I was jest showin' ——"

"Yeah?" say de Lawd. "Well, I'm gonter show you, too."

So Jonah drapped de fishin'-pole and grabbed for his Bible. But de Lawd was too quick for him. "Naw you don't," say de Lawd. "You done back-slid on me, and I'm gonter baptize you right hyar and now."

So de Lawd grabbed Jonah, and, kersplash! he put him under de water. "Now wash yo' sinful soul clean," he say.

Well, Jonah went down and he come up blub-berin' and sputterin' de water. "I'm revived, Lawd," he say. "I won't sin no more."

"You's sech a liar, Jonah," say de Lawd, "I don't b'lieve you." And he sont him down again.

So Jonah come up again. "I might er been lyin' de fust time, Lawd," he say, "but I'm plum redeemed dis time. I wouldn't lie to you, Lawd—

"Ain't hit a shame to tell a lie on Sunday!

Ain't hit a shame, Lawd, sin and a shame!"

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"No mind dat singin', Jonah," say de Lawd. "You got to tawk to me and tawk to me straight."

"What must I say, Lawd?" say Jonah.

"Tell me," say de Lawd, "and tell me straight. Had you druther go over yonder to Bald'in County and revive dem sinners, or had you druther stay over hyar and go fishin'?"

So Jonah he studied and he studied. "Lawd," he say, "dat ain't hardly right to take a man like me which is done quit lyin' and ax him dat question, right to his face."

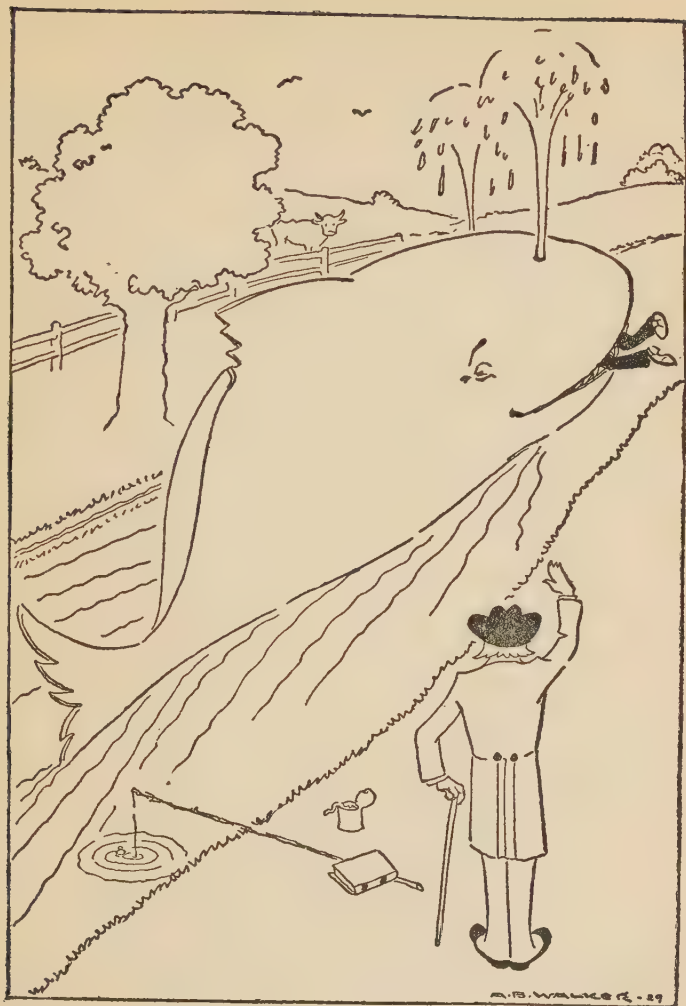
"Preach or fish?" say de Lawd.

"Well, Lawd," say Jonah, "I'm gonter tell you de trufe efn you drowns me. I'd druther fish."

"Well," say de Lawd, "I'm gonter give you all de fishin' you wants, right hyar and now." So he ducked old Jonah one more time. And whilst Jonah was under de water dat time, de Lawd r'ared way back and passed him a miracle, and de miracle was a natchal whale!

"Sick him, miracle," say de Lawd. And dat whale tuck out after Jonah!

Well, jest what happened to old Jonah ain't nobody but him and dat whale and de Lawd knows. And dey ain't tellin'. All anybody else



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knows is dat about fawty days and fawty nights after dat old Jonah come flat-footin' hit home, lookin' mighty ga'nt and smellin' mighty like fish.

"Well, I be dog!" say Miz Jonah. "Hyar you come, lookin' all whupped out like you got de fevers. Hyar, take dis cheer whilst I goes to de spring and fetches you a cool drink er water."

"No mind de water," say Jonah. "I ain't had nothin' but water for fawty days and fawty nights. I'm sick er water."

"Baptizin' so many people in Bald'in?" say Miz Jonah.

"Jest one was baptized," say Jonah. "But dat was aplenty for me."

"Well, I bet you's hongry, den," say Miz Jonah. "Lemme go bring you a nice slice er fish. I been down to de river dis mawnin' and kotched ——"

"Don't say fish at me, woman," say Jonah. "I got my doste er fish."

"Yeah?" say Miz Jonah. "I bet you went fishin' instid er revivin' dem sinners, like de Lawd told you to."

"I'm gonter tell you de gospel trufe," say

Jonah and That Whale

Jonah. "I did went fishin'. And dat ain't all. I kotched a whale!"

"Aw, git out!" say Miz Jonah. "Hit ain't no use to come lyin' to me, Jonah. I don't see how come you got to lie about how big de fish is."

"B'lieve hit or not," say Jonah. "But I kotched a whale."

"I don't b'lieve dat lie," say Miz Jonah. "'Cause what kind er bait did you use to ketch a whale wid?"

"Efn I told you dat," say Jonah, "den you'd know I was lyin'. And I ain't gonter tell you, 'cause I done quit lyin'."



Christmas Gift!

WELL, they was three men named Peter, Paul, and Silas. So one night they was settin' out in de yard, argyin' about how de Lawd done things, when all at once Peter looked up and seed a mighty bright star. So he spit on his finger and stamped de pa'm of his hand and say:

"Star bright, star bright!
Fust star I seed tonight!
Wish I may, wish I might!
I wisht old Sandy Claus would claw me!"

"What you wishin' about Sandy Claus for?" say Paul. "Hit ain't Christmas."

"I don't keer," say Peter. "I got Christmas in

Christmas Gift!

my bones, and my left hand been eetchin' all day. I jest know I'm bound to git a present."

"I ain't got no Christmas in my bones," say Silas.

"Dat ain't no sign hit ain't Christmas," say Peter, "jest because y'all boys ain't got Christmas in yo' bones. I got Christmas in my bones."

"Dat ain't no sign hit is Christmas, too," say Paul.

So dey sot and argyed and argyed about was hit gittin' Christmas or wa'n't hit. So finally Peter he up and allowed he knew a way to settle de argyment.

"Me and de old lady," he say, "is got a langshang hen which is been tryin' to set for I don't know how long. So to break her up f'm settin' we penned her up in a box, and ev'y Christmas at midnight dat hen hauls off and crows like a rooster. So le's set and listen at dat hen, and efn she crows like a rooster, well, dat'll make hit Christmas."

So Paul looked at Silas and Silas looked at Paul. "Whar you say you and de old lady got dat hen penned up?" say Paul.

"In de hen house," say Peter. "She been tryin'

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to set for I don't know how long, so us tuck and penned her up in a box in de hen house."

"Well," say Paul, "hit might be gittin' along twarge Christmas, at dat."

"Hit ain't no use in argyin'," say Peter; "le's set hyar and see do de hen crow."

So dey sot and talked about fust one thing and den de yuther to finally Paul led out a little song and Silas dragged up some bass. Hit was dat "shame on Sunday" song, but instid er singin' hit, "Ain't it a shame to do a sin on Sunday!" dem boys was singin', "Ain't it a shame to steal a hen on Sunday!"

"Whee-uw!" say Peter. "Dat sho was rotten singin'. How kin I hyar dat hen crow, wid all dat racket goin' on?"

"Aw, no mind is hit Christmas or ain't," say Paul, "I'd a heap druther sing den hyar a hen crow."

"Me too," say Silas. "Lead out again, Paul."

"Hold on a minute," say Peter. "I made up my mind to find out is hit Christmas, and I aims to find out."

So Paul wunk at Silas and Silas wunk at Paul. "Well," say Paul, "efn you's bound to find out

Christmas Gift!

whyn't you go out to de barn and see is de cow down on her knees a-prayin'?"

"Dat's right!" say Peter. "I mighty nigh forgot dat de cows pray on dey knees at Christmas."

So Peter went out to de barn to see was de cow prayin', but she wa'n't. So he set down to wait to midnight.

Well, he waited and he waited. De moon come up and de stars went out. But de old cow jest stood up and chewed at her hay.

"Maybe hit ain't midnight," say Peter, "'cause I sho feels Christmas in my bones." So he sot down and waited some more.

Well, after so long a time he hyared his old langshang cackle a few licks, and den she hauled off and crowed like a rooster!

So Peter he jumped up and runned to tell Paul and Silas dat de langshang had done crowed. But Paul and Silas wa'n't around, 'cause, instid er Paul and Silas, dar stood de sheriff wid de old langshang under his arm!

"Hyar yo' hen, Peter," say de sheriff. "I kotched Paul and Silas goin' off down de lane wid her, so I tuck 'em to jail, and den I brang yo' hen back home."

"Paul and Silas had my hen?" say Peter. "I bet

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dem boys stole my hen. Dey hadn't ought to do dat."

"Dey won't no more," say de sheriff, "'cause I'm fixin' to bail they trover from amazin' grace to a floatin' opportunity!"

So de sheriff gived Peter de hen, and Peter went on back to de barn to watch de cow some more. So when he wawked in he seed de cow down on her all-fours, a-groanin' and a-moanin' like a sinner at meetin'.

"I wonder is dat cow prayin'," say Peter, "or is she jest got de belly ache?"

"Don't make so much racket, Peter," say de cow. "Can't you hyar me prayin'?"

"Look out hyar, cow!" say Peter. "Don't come none er dat tawkin' stuff on me! You can't tawk and I knows hit! You try any er dat ju-ju on me and I'll take a bar'l stave and beat you up!"

"Peter," say de cow, "didn't I tole you to shet yo' mouf whilst I am prayin' my prayers? I bet de next time I tells you I'll tell you wid dese hawns er mine, and den I'll bet you quiets down."

"Well," say Peter, "I ain't de kind er man to argy wid a cow which can't tawk, nohow. But efn you looks like you wants to hook me wid dem hawns, I bet I git my rawhide and I bet I

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sets you afiyer! Hyar I comed out to my own barn, tryin' to find out is hit Christmas, and I finds my own cow a-tawkin' big-tawk at me! Cow, I don't put up wid dat kind er stuff f'm no man, let alone a cow!"

"Well, who does you put up wid dat kind er tawk f'm?" say de cow.

"Not nobody," say Peter. "Man nor cow. De Lawd is about de onliest man which kin big-tawk at me!"

"Well," say de cow, "jest watch me!" And whilst Peter was watchin', de Lawd faded right outn dat cow and stood up, square in front er Peter.

"Now, Peter," say de Lawd, "you been tryin' to find out is hit Christmas, ain't you?"

"Yas, Lawd," say Peter.

"And you been watchin' for de hen to crow like a rooster and de cow to pray like a man, ain't you?"

"Yassuh."

"Well," say de Lawd, "dat's all witch stuff, and I don't like hit. Dat ain't de way to find out, nohow. A langshang hen is liable to git buckish and crow like a rooster, any time. And a cow is

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liable to git de belly ache and git down and grunt and groan, any time.

"But, now," say de Lawd, "I'm gonter show you." So he tuck and led Peter in de next stall. And dar was de Poor Little Jesus a-layin' in de manger, r'ared back, suckin' his thumb and lookin' jest as brash as you please! And dar was Poor Mary and Joseph, standin' around, jest as proud as could be. And over in de cornder was a drove er angels, a-singin' new songs of Zion!

"Well, well!" say Peter. "Hyar I comed out to find is hit Christmas, and I found de Poor Little Jesus a-layin' in de manger! Don't dat jest beat de jukes, Lawd! Huntin' for Christmas and findin' de Poor Little Jesus!"

"Peter," say de Lawd, "hit's all de same thing. Any time you find de Poor Little Jesus, well, hit's Christmas, rain or shine, hot or cold, 'cause dat's what makes hit Christmas. Hit makes you feel so good to find him!"

"Well, Lawd," say Peter, "times is been mighty hard dis year, and I ain't got no present for de Poor Little Jesus. But I got a old langshang hen which I'm gonter give him. Jest wait."

"Peter," say de Lawd, "Little Jesus got all de hens he wants. Whyn't you take dat hen yo'se'f

Christmas Gift!

and wring her neck and git de old lady to roast her up brown, and den you and Paul and Silas eat her for dinner."

"Paul and Silas is in jail," say Peter.

"Naw dey ain't," say de Lawd. "Dey got to singin' ag'in in de jail, and de sheriff he put 'em out to git shut of 'em."

"Is dat a fack?" say Peter. "Well, I'm sho gonter wring dat hen's neck, 'cause hit ain't never yit been no hen which is too good to get et on Christmas!"

"Dat's de idee, Peter," say de Lawd. "Go on now and roast dat hen, and save me a piece er de breast!"



The Parable of the Good Samaritan

ONE day when de Lawd was marchin' his disciples around de wilderness, learnin' 'em how to preach de Word, old Peter up and remarked and say: "Lawd, I bet when us disciples git strung out at old Satan, I bet hit won't be a sinner left to tell de news."

"Yeah?" say de Lawd. "Dat's de way you figgers, hunh?"

"I ain't braggin', Lawd," say Peter, "but I been practicin' ev'y night, and when I gits goin' good, well hit ain't a sinner kin stand before me. I got a new song which say:

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

"I whups de devil around de stump
And give him a lick at ev'y jump!"

"And when I gits done whuppin' dat scound'el
he won't be no bigger'n a gnat."

"Well," say de Lawd, "dat's good tawk,
awright. But I specks us better quit tawkin' and
git to marchin'. I got to figger up a parable
about dat."

So de Lawd led 'em around de wilderness,
crunchity-crunch, over de leaves and across de
branch, to finally he hit a nice, mossy bank in de
shade. So he say, "Disciples, set down whilst I
preaches y'all a parable."

So ev'ybody swarmed around and sot down
while de Lawd tawked.

"F'm de way Peter was tawkin'," say de Lawd,
"hit look like about de time I turns y'all aloose
at de sinners. Well, all de sinners'll git saved. And
den whar'll you be?"

"Amen, Lawd," say Peter. "Whar us gonter
be?"

"Dat's de p'int," say de Lawd. "'Cause efn all
de sinners git saved, den y'all boys won't have
nothin' to preach about."

So de disciples squirmed around, and John he
say he ain't too good to go back to sheer croppin',

Ol' King David an' the Philistine Boys

and Paul say he never did mind fishin' for a livin', much, and de tawk run on like dat to finally de Lawd laugh and tell 'em not to worry.

"'Cause I'm gonter preach y'all a parable about a good man and didn't nobody know hit.

"Hit was a man name de Samaritan and he was a mighty good man. But de p'int was dat ev'ybody else in dis town whar he lived at was good, too.

"I'm tellin' you dis town—I forgits de name of hit—was one town in de land dat old Satan ain't hyared about. Hit wan't a lick er sin in dat town f'm one year to de next. All de boys and gals jest growed up and got married and raised chillun. And ev'ybody worked hard all day and went to preachin' at night. And come Sunday, de church was so full er people to hit wa'n't hardly no room left for de preacher. And all de church fo'ks was so good dat, did de preacher squeeze in, he didn't had nothin' to preach ag'in'. So dar dey was.

"Well, dis old Samaritan set around to he couldn't stand hit no longer. 'Dis town,' he say, 'is so good hit stinks. I ain't hyared no good sermon in a month er Sundays. De young fo'ks is so good dat hit ain't nothin' for de old fo'ks to

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

advise 'em on. And de gals is behavin' so nice dat even de Aid Society ain't got nothin' to chatter about. I swear to my soul I'm gittin' pyore tired er dis kind er doin's.' So he saddled up his mule and lit out twarge Bald'in County.

"Well, he hadn't rid far to he met up wid a stranger.

" 'Which er way, brother?' say de Samaritan.

" 'Down de road,' say de man. 'How about ridin' up behind you on dat mule you's ridin'?'

" 'O.K. wid me,' say de Samaritan, 'but I ain't shore about de mule. She don't like to tote double.'

" 'Ain't no harm in tryin' her, is dey?' say de man.

"So de man got up behind de Samaritan. But sho'nuff, de old mule balked square in her tracks!

" 'I was skeered she wouldn't tote double,' say de Samaritan.

" 'She tote single, awright, won't she?' say de man.

" 'Oh yeah,' say de Samaritan, 'she tote single good.'

" 'Awright, den,' say de man. And before dat Samaritan knowed what was happenin', dat low-down scound'el had done hit him behind de year

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wid a pair er brass knucks and knocked him off'n de mule! Laid dat Samaritan out cold in de ditch!

" 'Now you jest lay dar,' say de man. 'I been wantin' me a mule for a long time.' And he lit out twarge de town whar de Samaritan comed f'm.

"Well, when dat low-down sinner hit town things begin to take place. Fust off he sold dat Samaritan's mule for fawty dollars cash money!

" 'She's a good mule,' say de man. 'I could git fifty for her, but I ain't no hawg for money.'

"Den he bought him a plug hat and a swallow-tail coat and passed out de word dat he was a preacher.

" 'Yeah,' he say, 'I'm fixin' to hold me a revival in dis town dat'll learn some er you fat-mouf Christians more about sin den old Satan hisse'f knows! I means to preach ev'y one er y'all out!'

"Den, quick as de fo'ks thought he was a preacher he started socializin' about de town. And de fust thing which comed er dat, he had done up and lied to a widder woman's daughter and tricked her into thinkin' he gonter marry her!

"Well, whilst all dat stuff was goin' on, de Samaritan was comin' to his senses and gittin'



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back to town. And quick as he got, he hyared de news.

" 'Lemme see dat preacher which is gonter do so much,' say de Samaritan. 'I bet he de same sapsucker which hit me wid a pair er brass knucks and stole my mule.'

"So he looked around, and sho'nuff hit was de same thievin' man!

" 'Preacher, hunh?' say de Samaritan. 'You's a rogue! Whar my mule at? I'm gonter chain-gang you!'

" 'Aw, brother,' say de man, 'don't go tawkin' about dat mule. I'm in a mess er trouble wid a widder woman's gal, right now.'

" 'You ain't in ha'f as much trouble wid her as you is wid me,' say de Samaritan, 'cause I'm gonter set de law on you for totin' brass knucks and stealin' my mule. You stole dat mule, you rogue! I hopes you gits 'leven-twenty-nine on de chain gang. Buildin' roads, too!'

" 'Aw, now, mister,' say de man. But hit didn't git him nowheres 'cause de Samaritan got de law and put dat thievin', lyin', snake-in-de-grassin' rogue on de road gang!

"And f'm dat time on hit didn't git so lone-some in dat town. De preacher had somethin' to

The Parable of the Good Samaritan

preach about and de old fo'ks had somethin' to advise de chillun about, and when de Ladies Aid got done chatterin' about dat widder woman's gal, well dey tongues was wore out. And hit got so hit was a right pleasurable town to live in, so de people went and told de Samaritan: 'Samaritan, when you showed up dat low-down sinner in our midst you done pyore good. And f'm now on we gonter call you de Good Samaritan.'

"And," say de Lawd, "de p'int er dat parable is dis: Efn ev'ybody was good hit'd git so tire-some dat ev'ybody'd break down wid de all-overs. Efn hit wa'n't nobody bad, hit wouldn't be no p'int in bein' good, 'cause wouldn't nobody know about hit. Verily I say unto you, when I made Satan so he could make sin, I knowed what I was up to.

"Now, y'all disciples git out and whup Satan all you kin, but don't think he gonter stay whupped. I didn't plan him like dat. Ev'ybody loves Christmas, but s'posin' Christmas comed ev'y day!"



The Last Romance of Old King Ahab

THEY was a heap er kings over de Lawd's people and some of 'em was good and some of 'em was bad. But old King Ahab was pyore rotten. All he done was jest run around de country, sinnin' and carryin' on. And he wa'n't satisfied wid plain sinnin', but he had to git out in de big road and go braggin' about de devilment he got into.

So one day he was wawkin' down de road, singin':

The Last Romance of Old King Ahab

"I ain't never gonter git married,
And I ain't gonter settle down.
I'm gonter live like a rounder
And roam f'm town to town."

So about de time he got dat song outn his mouf he run smack into a man named de Prophet Micaiah.

"What kind er low-down song is dat you singin'?" say Micaiah.

"Hey-ho, Prophet!" say King Ahab. "What kind er sad news you spreadin' round town today. Ev'y time I sees you you's sayin' sad news wid yo' mouf."

"No mind dat," say Micaiah. "How come you ain't never gonter git married, King Ahab. A man had ought to git, and raise him some chilluns."

"Chilluns?" say King Ahab. "Man, I got seventy-eight chilluns right hyar in Samaria."

"And you ain't married?"

"Who, me? I ain't de marryin' kind, Prophet. Hit's seventy-some-odd widder women in dis town settin' on de doorsteps, waitin' for me to come and marry 'em up. And dis time next week hit's liable to be seventy-some-odd more."

So Micaiah preached him out for a sinner,

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right in de big road, but old King Ahab jest laughed and strutted off.

"Gonter live like a rounder
To de po-leece shoot me down!"

"Dat's a king," say Micaiah, "which is jest gittin' too big for his britches! I bet de Lawd won't put up wid dat stuff, too. I'm gonter prophet about him, right hyar and now; I prophets dat he gonter git married, and when I say married I mean he gonter git *so* married dat he won't git time to go on wid his devilment."

Well, Micaiah had been followin' behind de Lawd too long to set down and wait for some-thin' to happen, so he uped and got busy. De first thing he done, he went over back er town, and de next thing he done, he started in axin' questions.

"Henry," he say, "who dat little buckish, bush-haided gal standin' up yonder dancin' like hit ain't a shame left in de world?"

"You like her, hunh?" say Henry. "I'll git her over hyar."

So he brang de gal over to Micaiah. "Brother," he say, "I wants you to meet up wid Jezebel.

The Last Romance of Old King Ahab

She's about de fastest thing on Franklin Street. Jez, meet my old friend, hyar."

"What's de name?" say Jezebel.

"You kin call me Mike," say Micaiah.

So dey sot down and started in to tawkin' about de fust one thing and den de yuther, to finally Micaiah axed her, "Gal, how'd you like to git married?"

"I ain't de marryin' kind," say Jezebel.

"I means wid a preacher to say de words," say Micaiah.

"What country town did you comed f'm, boy?" say Jezebel.

"And de cou't-house licenses and all dat stuff?" say Micaiah.

"Hit's too much trouble, Country," say Jezebel. "Hit ain't worth hit."

So dey sot and tawked awhile longer, and finally Micaiah say: "S'posin' some boy wid a heap er money come along and changes yo' mind about dat stuff. I bet you'd settle down and cook his vittles and make him a good, easy wife?"

"Yeah?" say Jezebel. "Efn I ever gits married wid a man, I'm gonter keep him so busy buyin' me purty stuff to he won't have time to eat."

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"Purty clothes so you kin look purty for him, hunh?" say Micaiah.

"Ain't no use in lookin' purty for a man I already got," say Jezebel. "What I'm aimin' to do is look purty for a man which some yuther woman is got."

"Well," say Micaiah, "you's jest de kind er gal I'm huntin' for. Hit's a boy named old King Ahab which is liable to marry you."

"Him and who else?" say Jezebel.

"Dat's funny," say Micaiah. "Dem's about de ve'y words he say when I told him about you. He say he wouldn't marry no woman, especially one er dese little old bush-haired womens like you."

"He said dat, hunh?" say Jezebel.

"Dat's about what he purported," say Micaiah. "He said he wouldn't marry you efn he met you in de middle er de big road."

"He's a man, ain't he?" say Jezebel. "He made outn meat, ain't he?"

So old Prophet Micaiah knowed he had done done all de dirt he could do, so he got his hat and got along home to wait.

And he didn't had to wait long. De next

The Last Romance of Old King Ahab

mornin' old King Ahab was wawkin' down de road, singin':

"I don't love you woman,
Please don't dog me 'round.
Ef yo' cabbage goes to boilin',
Turn yo' damper down."

And about dat time he looked up, and dar stood dis Jezebel gal!

"Hey, baby," say King Ahab. "What you sayin' dis mawnin' so soon?"

"Hy-dy do, suh, Yo' Majesty," say Jezebel.

"You's lookin' mighty purty, all dressed up like dat," say King Ahab.

"You kings is jest too fly," say Jezebel. "My mamma told me I had better mind out for y'all kings, 'cause dey's too fly."

"Aw, le's stand hyar and tawk awhile," say Ahab. "You ain't in no hurry and I ain't goin' nowhars."

"You's too fly," say Jezebel. "Did I stand hyar and tawk to you, de first thing I know you might up and want me to marry you."

So Ahab jest laughed. "Baby," he said, "I'm a grown man and I ain't never axed no woman to marry me yit."

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"I'm skeered, anyhow," say Jezebel. "You turn me loose ——"

"Aw, don't go doin' like dat, gal," say Ahab. "Le's stand hyar and tawk some."

"Tawk about what?" say Jezebel.

"Anything you wants to tawk about, baby," say King Ahab.

"About gittin' married?"

"Anything you wants to."

"Hit ain't nice for de gal to tawk about gittin' married," say Jezebel. "You tawk."

So Ahab laughed again. "Sugar," he say, "I'm de king around dis man's town, and I ain't never tawked about gittin' married yit. But I'm feelin' funny today and 'scusin' how countrified you is, I'm gonter take you over and marry you! Dog efn I ain't!"

So dey went and got de licenses and den dey got Prophet Micaiah, who was doin' de preachin' in dat town, and got married up.

"Put all de stuff you got on hit," say King Ahab. "I'm givin' dis country gal a good time today, and I want ev'ything you got while hit lasts."

So when Micaiah got done sayin' de words, Ahab took his wife by de arm. "Come on, baby,"

The Last Romance of Old King Ahab

he say. "I'm gonter take and show you how good I'm is. I'm gonter take you over to de store and buy you a pair er stockin's."

"And what else you gonter buy me?" say Jezebel.

"Uh-uhh!" say Ahab. "Dat don't sound like country-gal tawk to me."

"I can't he'p what hit don't sound like, big boy," say Jezebel. "You better listen at me whilst I tawks. Stockin's ain't de startin' er what you fixin' to buy me. You fixin' to buy me some shoes and dresses and hats and rings and a heap er yuther purty stuff to wear. Den you gonter buy some yearlin's and have a barbecue, and den you gonter git a bar'l er hard-drinkin' licker to go wid de barbecue. 'Cause I told all er my boy friends dat quick as I married up wid you, well, I'd give 'em a hard-licker barbecue."

So Ahab looked at Jezebel and den he looked at Micaiah. "Prophet," he say, "did I go crazy and marry dat strumpet, or did I jest go crazy?"

"I ain't got nothin' to do wid dat," say Micaiah, "but you sho did marry her, and f'm what I knows about dat Jezebel gal, she gonter keep you married to her."

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"I bet you had somethin' to do wid dis stuff," say King Ahab.

"Maybe hit was me and maybe hit was de Lawd," say Micaiah.

"But, man," say Ahab, "dis gal's a strumpet. Dat ain't no way to do nobody, Prophet. Git him married up to a pyore alley cat like her."

"Old King Ahab," say Micaiah, "you been doin' a powerful lot er sin around hyar, lately, and you know good as me de Lawd is ag'in' sin. O' cou'se de Lawd know a man is liable to sin a little bit ev'y now and den, and a heap er times he shets his eyes to keep f'm seein' hit. But, naw! you wa'n't satisfied. You couldn't stop when you sinned. You had to git out in de big road and brag about yo' sin! And me, and de Lawd, too, ain't puttin' up wid dat kind er stuff. Now, you's married to Jezebel, and you gonter stay married to her, and she gonter keep you so busy buyin' stuff for her as long as you got a nickel left dat you ain't not on'y gonter have time to do no sinnin' no more, but you ain't gonter have time to brag about de sin you done already done.

"And de next time," say de Prophet Micaiah, "you feel like braggin', jest look what you got for braggin' de last time! Jezebel!"



Daniel in the Lions' Den

"OLD King Nebuchadnezzar," say Salomey, "I wants me a line."

"Now listen, baby," say de king, "I thought us argyed all er dat out yistiddy at de circus."

"We didn't argy," say Salomey. "I jest said I wisht I had me a line and you say you ain't gonter git me one. I don't call dat argyin'. Efn I was a king and a nice gal like me come along and axed me for a line, well I sho would buy her one."

"Nawp," say de king. "I ain't gonter buy you no lines. Besides, you ain't done no dancin' for My Majesty today. Git up and dance some."

"Naw, suh ——"

Ol' King David an' the Philistine Boys

"Listen, gal," say King Nebuchadnezzar. "When I said for you to git up and dance, well dat was a law which I passed. Now you go on and dance like de law says."

So Salomey she got up and danced a few licks, but de king didn't git intrusted.

"Git soople, gal," he say. "Hyar I'm about to die wid de all-overs and you dancin' like you been ironin' all day long. Come on whilst I pats my foot. Git soople. Da-der-da-der-da-da-da-der ——"

But Salomey jest drooled along.

"Dis ain't no fun," say old King Nebuchadnezzar. "Maybe you ain't no good today, or else maybe I'm jest woman-weary. Whar's dat preacher? Bring me Daniel and le's see kin he cyore me er de down-yonders."

Daniel was a good man and dat's how come old King Nebuchadnezzar had him around. "I got de onliest three-legged mule in de Promise' Land, and I got de onliest double-action Iver Johnson," say King Nebuchadnezzar. "I don't see how come I ain't got de onliest good man in town, too. Y'all boys git out and find me a good man, or don't come back." So dat's how come Daniel was at de king's house.

Daniel in the Lions' Den

"Daniel," say King Nebuchadnezzar, "you know any news today?"

"News ev'y day," say Daniel. "De Lawd is gittin' sick and tired er all er dat sin and stuff which is goin' on in dis town."

"Dat ain't news," say de king. "Dat's what you said yistiddy. And you hyared me pass a law dat hyarafter hit's ag'in' de law to try to revive My Majesty. So what else do you know?"

"I ain't tryin' to revive Yo' Majesty," say Daniel. "You ain't worth hit. But what gits me and de Lawd mad is how you's leadin' all de young gals into sin."

"Young gals and sin!" say King Nebuchadnezzar. "Dat's what I likes to tawk about. Let's tawk about dat some more."

"You ought to be ashame' to learn dem gals how to sin," say Daniel. "Yonder is dat Salomey. She ain't hardly dry behind de years yit, and you had her out to a circus all day yistiddy!"

"Me learn her how to sin?" say de king. "Boy, you sho is funny today! Listen, Daniel, I likes you good and I'm gonter tell you some news about Salomey: Dat gal was bawn wid more devilment under her hide den me and you bofe c'd learn her f'm now to Christmas!"

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"Don't let Daniel give me no hard name, King," say Salomey. "I jest axed for a line ——"

"You better axed to git saved, you strumpet!" say Daniel. "You's reekin' wid sin and dancin' wid de devil, right now!"

"Listen at him, Yo' Majesty!" say Salomey. "Givin' me a hard name!"

"Well, all I got to say," say King Nebuchadnezzar, "efn she dances wid de devil like she been dancin' 'round hyar today, de devil got a heap er patience. I wouldn't put up wid hit, and I don't b'lieve de devil would."

"You don't like my dancin', old King Nebuchadnezzar, hunh?" say Salomey.

"Not good enough to git you a line," say King Nebuchadnezzar.

"Well, hit's dem which does," say Salomey.

"Meanin' which?" say de king.

"Meanin'," say Salomey, "dat I danced for de man at de circus and he gived me a whole cageful er lines, yistiddy. And I was jest axin' you to give me one, to see would you. I don't need none er yo' old lines, nohow."

"A cageful?" say King Nebuchadnezzar. "What you gonter feed 'em on?"

Daniel in the Lions' Den

"Dey's in yo' back yard, Yo' Majesty," say Salomey. "You feed 'em."

"Now yo' kind er gittin' funny, too, baby," say de king. "Keep on and fust thing you know you'll be funny as Daniel."

So dat kind er tickled Salomey and she got up and started dancin' again. "I might not kin dance good, Yo' Majesty," she say, "but jest shet one eye and look at dis Sally Long," and she pulled one on him dat mighty nigh knocked him blind!

"Go on, baby," say de king, "I ain't payin' you no mind. Da-der-da-der-da-da-da-der ——"

"You gonter feed my lines, Yo' Majesty?" say Salomey.

"Baby, I feeds yo' lines any time you wants 'em fed."

"On what?" say Salomey.

"Anything you wants 'em fed on," say de king.

"Is dat a law?" say Salomey.

"Dat's a law which I passed for good-lookin' you," say King Nebuchadnezzar. "Hit's a law dat you kin name de rations."

So Salomey danced a few more licks and den she oozed up to de king. "Feed 'em on Daniel," she say, "'cause he been tryin' to give me a hard name."

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"But, baby," say de king, "I kind er likes Daniel ——"

"You passed de law," say Salomey. "Feed my lines on Daniel."

"Yep," say de king, "I passed de law, and, Daniel, you hyared hit. I hope hit won't be no hard feelin's, 'cause I kind er likes you and I'm sho gonter miss you when you's gone."

"No mind me, Yo' Majesty," say Daniel. "I hyared de law, same as ev'ybody else. Hit ain't but one thing I axes you about hit, though."

"And dat is?" say de king.

"Don't cook me," say Daniel. "Feed me to 'em raw."

"Dat's jest as you say, Daniel," say de king.

"And whole, too," say Daniel.

"Any way you say," say de king.

Well, hit jest goes to show you how de Lawd is always lookin' out after de good people. De Lawd seed dem lines comin' in de back yard, and he knowed exactly what Daniel was gonter say to Salomey quick as he seed her doin' dat sinful dance, so he kind er figgers Daniel is liable to git hisse'f mixed up wid de lines before hit was all over.

So de Lawd spoke to Daniel and say, "Daniel,

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f'm de way things shapes up, dat strumpet is liable to git you fed to de lines. 'Cause she's mean enough to want to and she's smart enough to do what she wants to."

"Well, Lawd," say Daniel, "I kind er hoped I'd live to revive dat gal and git her on yo's side. But efn hit's on de cyards dat I'm gonter be line bait, jest tell old Saint Peter I wears a six-and-seven-eights size crown, and I likes my wings middlin' big."

"Well," say de Lawd, "dat's de way I likes to hyar a man tawk. But hit ain't in my plans dat you gonter be line bait, son. Hit's in my plans dat you gonter revive old Salomey. Salomey ain't so bad. She think she is out workin' for de devil, but she ain't, she's workin' for me all de time and don't know hit. 'Cause I got hit all planned out. And hit's part er my plans dat you gonter git pitched in de lines' cage."

"Efn you got hit planned like dat," say Daniel, "don't change no plans on my account. Cou'se I ain't never been fed to no lines ——"

"And dat ain't all, son," say de Lawd. "You ain't never gonter. You jest go on and git in wid dem lines, and I'll watch out for you."

So de people set around for a while and finally

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Daniel told 'em he b'lieve he'd go git in de cage wid dem lines.

"Bring me breakfust early in de mawnin'," he say, "'cause hit look like a busy night before me."

So dat made de king laugh. "I swear, Daniel," he say, "you gittin' funnier all de time. Efn you's hyar in de mawnin', I'll pass a law for you, too."

So Daniel went on and got in de cage. "I'm countin' on you, Lawd," he say.

"I'm right hyar," say de Lawd. "Lay down and go to sleep. Put yo' head on dis big line over in de cornder, 'cause dat's me. And in case de yuther lines gits scrumptious, I'll bluff 'em out."

So de next mawnin' ev'ybody comed out to see what was left er poor Daniel, and dar he was, settin' on de biggest line in de cage!

"Whar my breakfust?" say Daniel. ". . . Hyar, line, don't breathe so deep. You wearies my stomach, goin' up and down like dat before breakfust!"

"Well, doggone old Miz Mitchell!" say Salomey. "Efn dat boy ain't gone and got dem lines pyore tame! Big'n', I didn't know you was a line-tamer."



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"Not me," say Daniel. "Me and de Lawd."

"Anyway you says, big boy," say Salomey. "I likes lines 'cause dey's so wild. But a big scound'el like you ——"

"Yeah," say Daniel, "I knows what you's fixin' to say. You's fixin' to say you bet I c'd tame you, too."

"I bet you kin, too, you big old gi'nt!" say Salomey.

"You ain't worth de trouble, gal," say Daniel.

"Aw, come on and tame me, old line-tamer," say Salomey.

"Well, baby," say Daniel, "I can't do hit by myse'f. But efn you wants to git tamed, me and de Lawd kin, scusin' you do what I says."

"Say what," say Salomey, "and den watch me."

"Well," say Daniel, "you got to quit yo' devilment, and come to preachin' ev'y Sunday, and stop dancin' and runnin' around wid old King Nebuchadnezzar ——"

"Say on, big boy," say Salomey. "All dat stuff is easy ——"

"Hold on dar," say de king. "I'm gonter pass me a ——"

"Yeah, you gonter pass a law," say Daniel.

Daniel in the Lions' Den

"But you ain't gonter pass de law you's fixin' to. You's fixin' to pass a law dat Salomey is yo' woman. But last night you said you'd pass a law for me. So come on and pass my law. Pass a law which say dat hyarafter you ain't gonter have no more young gals hangin' round de cou't-house, Salomey same as de rest."

"Well," say King Nebuchadnezzar, "I told you I'd pass hit, so she's passed. Git out, Salomey. And git dem lines out, too."

"Daniel," say Salomey, "don't let dat old king tawk to me like dat."



The Business of the Lord

ABOUT de time a man git to whar he think he got hit all figgered out, well dat's about de time dat de Lawd gonter fool him, good and proper. And dat's jest what de Lawd done to old Jacob.

Jacob was always settin' back in his cheer, tellin' his chillun what de Lawd wanted done and what he didn't want. "Reuben," he say, "de Lawd wants dat hillside planted in whupperwill peas." When all de time de Lawd don't keer is hit in whupperwill peas or Japanese clover. "Joseph, whyn't you take off dat fancy coat and

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git in yo' overhalls? De Lawd likes a man to wear overhalls in de field."

"I ain't workin' in de fields today, daddy," say Joseph. "I had me a dream ——"

"Yeah?" say Jacob. "Efn you worked more and didn't sleep so much, you wouldn't be havin' dem crazy dreams. De Lawd is ag'in' dreams."

And dat's about de way things was takin' place around Jacob's house, wid Joseph all de time gittin' dressed up in his Sunday clothes and havin' dreams, and Jacob r'arin' back and tellin' de boys how de Lawd wanted things done. To finally de Lawd got tired of all er dat tawk.

"Joseph," say de Lawd, "you's awright, only, you's kind er in de middle. Efn you was de oldest, like Reuben, well, yo' daddy would be used to yo' ways by now and go easy on you. Or efn you was de youngest, like Benjamin, well, he'd be hopin' you gonter turn out better'n de yuthers. But, son, you's in de middle."

"Lawd," say Joseph, "I don't b'lieve I'm cut out for no field hand nohow."

"I ain't sayin' a word about dat," say de Lawd. "But I got me a plan in my mind about you. You jest keep right on dreamin' dreams and

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tellin' 'em, and fust thing you know my plan gonter come to pass."

So Joseph kept on dreamin' to finally he dreamed he was de smartest one in de family.

"I drempt," he say, "dat even pa was settin' round axin' me what do I think er dis and dat, and I was settin' back, tellin' him."

"Yeah?" say Benjamin. "Wait to I tell him on you for dat dream, and I bet he fix you so you can't set."

"And dat ain't all I drempt," say Joseph. "I drempt I was rich and y'all was poor, and y'all was beggin' and stealin' f'm me."

"I ain't gonter tell pa about dat'n'," say Reuben. "I'm gonter whup you my own se'f."

Well, dat made Joseph mad, so he went to de house and dressed up in his Sunday clothes and lit out for town.

"Dat's de end er dat wuthless scound'el," say Jacob. "De Lawd don't love nobody which is always dreamin' out his family, and de Lawd don't love nobody which is all de time struttin' around in fancy clothes. But when a boy gits to runnin' off to town instid er stayin' at home and workin', well, me and de Lawd bofe don't like dat."

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Well, dat was what Jacob said, and to hyar him say hit you'd 'a' thought de Lawd had put de words in his mouf. But de Lawd had his own plans.

So when Joseph got to town he wawked up and down de street, bowin' to de ladies and speakin' wid de men, to purty soon old King Pharaoh come ridin' by.

"Well," say King Pharaoh, "look at dat suit er clothes dat boy got on. I bet I'm gonter git me one like dat. . . . Say, son, whar'd you git dat suit er clothes you got on?"

"Me?" say Joseph. "I buyed hit."

"Well, I be doggone!" say old King Pharaoh. "I'm gonter buy me one like dat. Come on and git in de surrey and show me whar."

So Joseph got in wid old King Pharaoh. "I kin show you," he say, "but you don't want one like dis'n'. I got one like dis'n'. What you wants is one a heap fancier, 'cause you de king and I ain't nothin' but de king's friend."

"Dat's a fack!" say Pharaoh. "Boy, you got a head on you like a mule!"

And dat's how come Joseph got to be such good friends wid old King Pharaoh.

So all dat time Joseph kept right on havin'

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dreams and tellin' 'em to fo'ks, and finally he had one which say hit's gonter be a powerful long dry spell de next summer. So he told King Pharaoh.

"What you want me to do about hit?" say King Pharaoh. "I kin do a heap er stuff, Joseph, but I can't make hit rain in dry weather."

"Well," say Joseph, "cawn is sellin' at four bits a bushel now, cause hit's so much cawn in de land. But next fall, when dat dry weather git done burnin' up de crops, well, hit'll be sellin' for about a dollar."

So Pharaoh didn't said a word. He jest reached in his pocket. "Hyar is my purse, Joseph," he say. "Go buy all de four-bit cawn you kin buy and put hit in de crib. And when next fall come we splits de profits, 'cause hit's my money and yo' brains."

Well sho 'nuff, dat's jest de way hit turned out, and quick as de dry spell hit, ev'ybody come to buy cawn f'm Joseph. So he put him up a sign on de crib which say:

Cawn for sale!

\$1 per Bushel!

Cash Only!

And hit wa'n't long before Joseph's daddy run short er cawn, so he sont de boys to town to buy

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some. "Don't git in no devilment," he say. "'Cause de Lawd is kind er ag'in' boys goin' to town."

Well, Joseph seed de boys comin', so he went and borried King Pharaoh's robe and crown and put on like he was de king.

"Y'all boys want to buy some cawn?" say Joseph.

"We kind er thinkin' about hit, efn hit's cheap enough," say Reuben.

"Well, bend yo' knees and call me My Majesty," say Joseph, "and den we'll start tawkin' business."

So dey done dat and Joseph ax 'em how much dey's countin' on payin' for cawn and Reuben say about six bits.

"Drive on," say Joseph. "Hit'll cost you a dollar and a quarter."

So dey argyed awhile, and all at once Joseph up and remarked dat he thought old man Jacob had twelve boys. "I don't count but 'leven," he say. "Whar de yuther one? Out stealin' my cawn whilst y'all is bargainin', I bet."

"Nawsuh," say Reuben. "Don't none er us boys steal. Even old wuthless Joseph wouldn't

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steal. He runned off ag'in' de Lawd's wishes, but he won't steal."

"Whar did he run off to?" say Joseph.

"Whar did de Prodigal Son run off to?" say Reuben. "Better ax somebody dat knows. De last I seed er dat wuthless scamp he was dressed up in his Sunday best, goin' down de road. And good riddance, I says."

"Um-humm!" say Joseph. "Whar yo' daddy at?"

"He at home."

"Well," say Joseph, "I tell you what I'll do. I'll split de diffunce and sell you dat cawn for a dollar a bushel."

So de boys paid for de cawn, and whilst dey wa'n't lookin', Joseph took de money and snuck hit in Benjamin's sack. "Now git home to yo' daddy," he say.

But about de time dey got started he started yowlin' and raisin' sand. "Hey!" he say. "Hold on dar! Somebody stole my money! Which one er you rogues tuck dat money?"

"Us don't steal," say Reuben. "Come and search de sacks and see."

"I'm gonter," say Joseph. And he did, and

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when he opened Benjamin's sack, dar was a roll er greenbacks big enough to choke a cow!

"Well, I be doggone!" say Benjamin. "I wonder how come dat money in my sack!"

"I speck," say Joseph outn de side er his mouf, "dat hit jest wawked in yo' sack. Money'll do dat around some people."

"But I didn't steal hit, Mister King Pharaoh, Yo' Majesty," say Benjamin.

"Naw?" say Joseph. "But I'm gonter ball-and-chain you on de road gang for 'leven months and twenty-nine days to I find out who did."

"But, Mister King Pharaoh," say Reuben, "dat boy didn't take dat money. He don't steal. Lemme go git my pa to go on his bonds."

"Go git yo' pa," say Joseph.

So Reuben went and got old Jacob, and Jacob started goin' on Benjamin's bonds. "I ought to knowed better den to let y'all boys come to town," he say. "De Lawd is ag'in' boys comin' to town."

"How you know de Lawd is ag'in' a boy comin' to town?" say Joseph.

"Well," say Jacob, "he comed; and look at him now. And my yuther boy, name Joseph, comed to town and he done gone plum to de

Ol' King David an' the Philistine Boys

dogs. I sho wish you'd advise me what to do, old King Pharaoh."

"You wants me to advise you?" say Joseph.

"Kindly, efn you please," say Jacob.

"Well," say Joseph, "my advice is dis, hyar-after you let de Lawd mind his business and you mind yo's."

"But, King," say Jacob, "dat ain't gittin' Benny outn jail and hit ain't bringin' Joseph home."

"You do like I advise," say Joseph, "and de boys'll be O.K."

"Efn you say," say Jacob, "I'll do hit."

So Joseph tuck off his crown and robe and put on his own fancy coat, and dar he was!

"Joseph!" say Jacob. "I knowed all de time dat de Lawd wanted ——"

"Watch out dar!" say Joseph. "You got to let de Lawd's business alone f'm now on, or else I'll put dis crown back on my head and raise sand. De Lawd give ev'y man a plenty er business to mind of his own, widout huntin' for somebody else's business to 'tend to. Now you go ahead and farm yo' farm, and de Lawd stay outn hit. De Lawd got plenty er business to 'tend to widout ev'ybody settin' around thinkin' up more for

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him. And do he want you to know what his business is, he'll give you dreams like he gived me. But don't think dat jest 'cause you want somethin' dat dat make de Lawd want hit too. De Lawd is too busy doin' his own business to mind all er dat. He got a million things to do before you kin bat yo' eyes. Now git on back to dat farm, and I'll see efn I can't dream about some wet weather next time."



Futile Sin

DE EASIEST job old King Ahab ever done was quittin' de Lawd. All he had to do was to quit goin' to church and start runnin' around. But King Ahab lived in sin for fawty years and up to de day he died he never could git de Lawd to quit him.

And dat's how come Ahab never had no good time wid his sinnin'. He sinned and sinned to hit wa'n't a shame in his soul. He stole like a rogue and he thieved f'm de widder women. He robbed de poor and he robbed de rich and he cheated de blind and de lame. He lied and gambled and he run wid de women and filled his heart wid proud-

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fulness. But all de time he was doin' dat de Lawd kept old Prophet Micaiah tellin' him sad news and wearyin' his sinful soul.

So finally Ahab had him a plan and he sent for Prophet Micaiah.

"Prophet," he say, "me and you ain't been gittin' along so good. You all de time prophetin' bad news about me. What you say we gits lined up side by side and you start sayin' good things which is gonter come to my pass?"

"Old King Ahab," say Micaiah, "hit's jest as easy for me to prophet good news as hit is bad. But de p'int is, I got to prophet bad cause hit ain't no good."

"Seem like to me," say King Ahab, "dat some er de old-timey prophets used to prophet good for dey kings."

"Dey kings had some good in 'em, too," say Micaiah.

"Dar you go wid dat tawk again," say King Ahab. "But de p'int er what I sont for you about is dis, I got me somethin' on my mind which I wants you to prophet about."

"What you got in yo' mind," say Micaiah, "ain't gonter turn out like you want hit to."

"Uh-uh-h-h," say King Ahab. "I knowed

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you'd say somethin' like dat. Micaiah, you goes out er yo' way to ack pleasant, don't you?"

"Nawp," say Micaiah. "Er cou'se efn I wanted to make you happy I c'd tell you de same as dat little two-by-four prophet named Zedekiah which you hired yistiddy ——"

"How you know I hired anybody yistiddy?" say King Ahab.

"I knows a heap," say Micaiah. "You hired him to prophet for you and he propheted dat old Queen Jezebel was gonter die purty soon, and you raised his wages right offn de bat."

"Hit was de fust good news I ever hyared f'm a prophet," say Ahab.

"I told him dat news," say Micaiah, "or else he never could 'a' done hit."

"No mind who told him," say Ahab. "Is hit a fack dat she gonter die quick?"

"Hit is," say Micaiah.

"You gittin' good, too, Micaiah," say King Ahab. "I raise yo' wages ——"

"Hold on a minute to I git done," say Micaiah. "Jezebel ain't gonter live much longer, all right, and hit don't take no prophetin' to tell dat. Ev'y since she been livin' upstairs, I knowed dat. 'Cause she gonter fall outn de window when she

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git drunk, some time. Anybody's liable to do dat."

"Or else," say Ahab, "I'm liable to git drunk and th'ow her out."

"But," say Micaiah, "hyar's whar de genuine prophetin' comes in. Jezebel gonter die purty soon, but *she gonter outlive you, old King Ahab!*"

"Shet yo' mouf, fool!" say King Ahab. "Don't come prophetin' like dat at me!"

"Dat's de facks, pyore and simple," say Micaiah. "I didn't make 'em, but I sho propheted 'em."

"I stood all de foolishness offn you I'm gonter," say Ahab. "I put up wid yo' dry-weather tawk, and I put up wid yo' plague tawk. I even put up wid dat trick er gittin' me married up to old Queen Jezebel. But when you go to prophetin' dat I'm gonter die before Jezebel, well, I ain't aimin' to put up wid dat. Micaiah, you's fired! You hyar me? You's fired!"

"Is dat a fack?" say Micaiah. "Well, listen at dis, old King Ahab. You go git de same piece er paper whar you got hit writ down dat I'm hired, and den git yo' pencil and put de latest news about me bein' fired on dat same piece er paper."

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"I ain't wrote down on no paper ——" say Ahab.

"All right, den," say Micaiah. "You didn't hire me. How you gonter fire me?"

"But, man," say King Ahab, "I say 'you's fired'! You gonter quit, ain't you?"

"Any time de man which hired me," say Micaiah, "tells me dat I'm fired, well I'm gonter quit. But ontwell den ——"

"Aw, Micaiah," say Ahab, "whyn't you quit jokin' and go on about yo' business?"

"I ain't jokin'," say Micaiah. "I'm tellin' you what de Lawd knows."

"Well," say Ahab, "don't tell me, 'cause I ain't intrusted. And hyarafter hit's ag'in' de law for you to do any tawkin' around me."

So Ahab went out and hired him all de prophets and fawtune-tellers he could find, and he made Zedekiah his head prophet. "I'm payin' y'all boys good wages," he say, "and I better not hyar nothin' but good news f'm you."

So one day de king was fixin' to give a big barbecue and he axed Zedekiah what do de weather look like hit gonter do.

"Well, Yo' Majesty," say Zedekiah, "hit look

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like she gonter be kind er clear and cool. Jest about right for a barbecue."

"Dat's de way I likes to hyar my prophet prophet," say King Ahab. "You better take Sad-day evenin' off and go to town, for dat."

And den Ahab looked at Micaiah so he could "yi-yi" at him. But Micaiah was over in de cornder, swagin' his knee wid a mullen leaf, like he had de rheumatism.

"Doggone dat man's hide!" say King Ahab. "When his knee hurts, dat's a sho sign er rain!"

And sho'nuff! When time come for dat barbecue hit was rainin' for who last de longest!

Well, things went along about like dat to de fust thing you know old King Ahab got him a bad case er de down-yonders. Jezebel she got drunk and argyed at him all de time, but she wouldn't fall outn de window. And Ahab he got drunk and tried to push her out, but he come mighty nigh fallin' out, hisse'f. And all de prophets struck for higher wages or else dey was gonter quit prophetin' good. So finally King Ahab sont for Micaiah.

"Prophet Micaiah," say King Ahab, "I got de all-overs and I got 'em bad. I b'lieve a good war

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would do me more good den anything else. So I sont to ax you for some advice."

"I ain't much on advice, old King Ahab," say Micaiah, "but I'll do de best I kin. I'd do dat much for a dog."

"Well," say Ahab, "hyar's de p'int. Did I up and say I'm gonter have me a war wid de Franch or de Eye-talians or de Chinese, well, you'd up and prophet dat I'm gonter git my pants whupped offn me. And I sho would, too, 'cause whatever else you do, Micaiah, you prophets straight."

"Hit ain't me," say Micaiah, "hit's me and de Lawd."

"Well, no mind dat," say King Ahab. "What I want you to do is pick out me somebody which my army kin whup, 'cause you know hit ain't no fun to git whupped in de war."

"Well," say Micaiah, "I prophets dat yo' army kin whup dem Syrian boys, old King Ahab, efn you git down to business wid 'em."

"Dem scound'els is as good as whupped right now, Micaiah," say Ahab. So he sont for his army and lined 'em up and say: "Army, we gonter whup dem Syrian boys f'm Balmoral to Belial.

Futile Sin

Even old Sad News Micaiah say so. Ain't dat right, Prophet?"

"Yo' army gonter whup dem Syrians," say Micaiah. "Dat's what I propheted, and I sticks to hit."

So de army pitched in on de Syrians and was whuppin' 'em good, and ev'ybody was fightin' and goin' on and havin' a good time, and old King Ahab was settin' 'round, whoopin' and hollerin' and eggin' his boys on, when all at once a Syrian boy snuck up wid a rock in his hand. Kerblip! He tuck old Ahab right over de left year, and Ahab went down like de lightnin' had done struck him!

"Dat ain't right, Micaiah," say King 'Ahab. "You propheted ——"

"I propheted dat yo' army gonter whup dem Syrians," say Micaiah, "and efn you'd raise up and look, you c'd see dem Syrians runnin'. But you ain't got time to do dat, Ahab, cause Jezebel is staggerin' around dat window, right now, and purty soon she gonter fall out and bust her neck."

"Doggone ev'ything I kin think of!" say 'Ahab. "Dat de way wid ev'ything which ever happen to me. Bad news all my life, and den

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quick as de good news start happenin', well, I got to up and die before hit happen. Seem like I ain't never had me no good time."

"Hit's yo' own doin's, Ahab," say Micaiah. "You lookin' for fun in de wrong place. You lookin' for a good time in sin, and sin is about de tiresomest thing in de world. You ought to look for yo' good times in de Lawd, son. Dat's whar you gits a good time."

"I knows dat now," say Ahab, "but dat's jest like ev'ything else. I knows hit too late to do me some good. 'Cause I'm dead now, Micaiah. I hope you and de Lawd ain't got nor hard feelin's ag'in' me 'cause I was such a fool, Micaiah?"

"Not none," say Micaiah. "A fool can't he'p bein' a fool, I don't keer how smart he think he is."



The Lord's Way with Women

"BARAK," say de Lawd, "I'm gonter turn things over to y'all men and git on back about my business. I and Moses led y'all to de Promise' Land and I and Joshua learnt you how to whup de Philistines. Now, y'all do de rest. Whup de Philistines some more and keep outn devilment."

"Hit sounds easy," say Barak.

"Hit is, once you git de swing of hit," say de Lawd. "But watch dem Philistines. Dey's like a woman. You got to whup 'em about once a week to keep 'em straight."

Well, de Lawd hadn't got ha'fway back to Glory before de Hebrews was gittin' in a little

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devilment, and in less'n a week de Philistines was dribblin' across de branch, stealin' and cussin' and gittin' drunk and raisin' sand.

"Dem Philistines," say Barak, "is mighty tricky fighters. Us got to watch out how us fights 'em and not make 'em mad." So de men-fo'ks tawked hit over and den dey sont de Philistines de word which say, "We'll leave y'all alone efn y'all will leave we alone."

So de Philistines hyared dat and dey sont back word to de Hebrews: "We ain't aimin' to leave nobody alone, but efn y'all don't leave we alone hit'll be a heap er widder women on yo' side er de creek. We ain't huntin' for no trouble, but we's all saddled up, and efn you wants to ride, jest hop on."

"Well, doggone old Miz Mitchell!" say Barak. "Dem boys ain't tryin' to git along like friends, is they?"

So de Philistines kept comin' 'cross de branch, stealin' de corn and stealin' de stock and gittin' drunk and carryin' on wid de Hebrew gals, to finally old Barak got ashame'!

"I'm gonter git out er town," he say. "Hit's a good-lookin' widder woman live up de country,

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and I'm gonter go see her and see kin I git me a good, quiet home."

So he lit out to de widder woman's house.

"Good mawnin', Sister Deborah," he say.

"How you gittin' on?"

"O. K.," say Deborah.

"Dat's a mighty nice field er cotton you got out yonder," he say.

"I knows hit," say Deborah, "and de reason hit's so nice is because I don't got to depend on no wuthless man to work hit for me."

"Well, well," say Barak, "you sho got to joke some, ain't you? I tell you what, baby; you tawk right wid me and de fust thing you know I'll be out yonder plowin' in dat cotton patch. How you like dat?"

"I ketch you in my cotton patch," say Deborah, "and I'll send you home wid a load er buckshot in yo' rusty hide, too."

"How come you don't want me in de cotton patch, gal?" say Barak.

"Plenty reasons," say Deborah. "One is dat did you git out dar, de Philistines would come swarmin' in, seein' you ain't nothin' but a man."

"De Philistines ain't gonter harm nobody," say Barak.

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"Den how come you skeered of 'em?" say Deborah.

"Me?" say Barak. "I ain't."

"Don't try to lie to me," say Deborah. "You skeered and so is ev'y yuther pants-wearin' man in town. All anybody got to do is say 'Philistine,' and y'all men'll hide in de canebrake for a week."

"Well, Deborah," say Barak, "I'm gonter tell you. I ain't skeered, onderstand. I'm a peaceable man ——"

"You's a peaceable liar," say Deborah. "You's pyore skeered."

"Dey is kind er dangersome," say Barak. "Dey's too reckless and too many."

"Whyn't you trick 'em efn dey's too many for a fair fight?" say Deborah.

"And git 'em mad?" say Barak. "Woman, dem scound'els is bad enough when dey's happy, let alone when dey's mad. And, besides, dey ain't never done me nothin'. I ain't got no call to fight 'em."

"Dey runned off yo' hosses," say Deborah, "and stole yo' corn and hogs, and I bet hit ain't so much as a hog jowl in yo' smokehouse right now. Maybe dat ain't nothin'."

"Maybe is I skeered," say Barak. "Maybe I's

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skeered to fight a buzz-saw. Or else maybe I got more sense den to."

"Dey don't look like no buzz-saw to me," say Deborah.

"Aw, baby," say Barak, "le's don't tawk about dem Philistines no more. Le's set hyar and tawk about somethin' else. Le's set hyar and tawk about how good-lookin' you is. Doggone dem old handsome eyes er yo'n!"

Well, Deborah was a woman, and a widder woman at dat. "You likes my old eyes, Barak?" she say.

"Darlin', I likes ev'ything about old good-lookin' you," say Barak. "I likes you more gooder den any yuther woman in de county 'cause you's so purty."

"Is dat a fack?" say Deborah.

"Dat ain't ha'f of a fack," say Barak. "You jest say what you want me to do and den watch me up and do hit for old sweet you."

"Well," say Deborah, "go whup de Philistines efn you loves me."

"Uh-uhh!" say Barak. "I was gittin' along too fast. I knowed hit was a ketch somewhars. Gimme my hat and lemme go home. Good-by."

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So Barak started to leave, and Deborah knowed she was gonter miss out on all dat sweet tawk which he had done started, so she told him to wait. "'Cause I got a idee," she say. "Come Sadday de Ladies Aid is givin' a to-do for de church, and I'm gonter set in a tent and tell fortunes for ev'ybody which is got a dime. So you go git me a hammer and a twenty-penny nail, and den go spread de word to de Philistines about how good-lookin' I'm is, and tell 'em I might knock off a nickel on de price, scusin' as how it's dem, and I don't know what all else."

So come Sadday, Deborah got de hammer and de nail and got in de tent. "You stand around handy, Barak," she say, "and do what I tell you."

So she got out in front er de tent and say: "Come on and git yo' fortune told! Don't cost but a dime! Philistines only a nickel! Come on, big old Philistine and let me tell yo' handsome fortune!"

"You kin tell anything I got, and den some," say de Philistine. So he comed in and sot in de cheer. "Tell hit, good-lookin'," he say. "Tell hit purty for big old me."

"Well, shet yo' eyes, den, handsome," say Deborah.

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"Dey's shet, baby," say de Philistine. "Say on."

"Awright," say Deborah. "Heavy, heavy hangs over yo' head!" And she tuck de nail and sot hit in de crown er his head and den she tuck de hammer and sunk hit clear down at one lick!

"Drag him out, Barak," say Deborah, "whilst I gits me another Philistine's fortune told."

So she kept up like dat, and by sundown hit wa'n't a Philistine on dis side er de branch! And when de Hebrews hyared de news dey got up a big good-time to make fun.

"We whupped de Philistines!" say Barak. "We ain't skeered! We whupped 'em once and we kin whup 'em again! Bring on de Philistines and watch me!"

"Barak!" say Deborah. "Stop dat racket and git on home and feed de chickens and milk de cows!"

"Aw, baby," say Barak, "dat ain't no work for a man to do."

"You hyared me!" say Deborah. "Git! Efn hit takes me to whup de Philistines when you's too triflin' skeered, well, hit takes you to do my housework. Put plenty er buttermilk in de biscuits, and put a heap er side meat in dem turnip greens!"

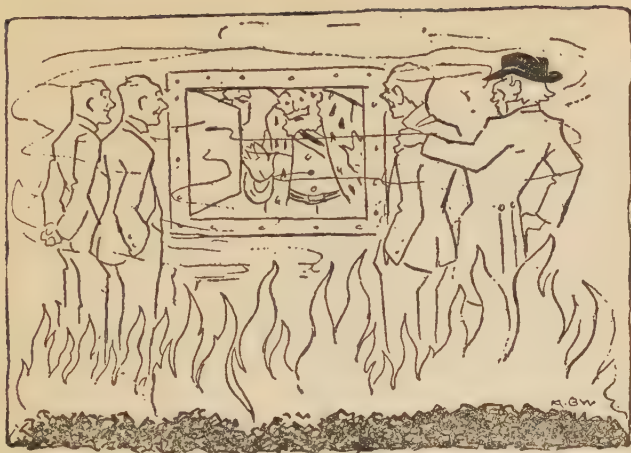
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But jest about dat time, up stepped de Lawd!

"Hold on, sister," he say. "Hit was mighty smart er you to whup de Philistines, and hit was mighty low down er de menfo'ks to be skeered of 'em. But I fixed hit like dat jest to shame de menfo'ks. I jest wanted to show 'em dat efn dey wouldn't whup mine enemies, well, de womenfo'ks would, and den dey'd be ashame'.

"Now, I ain't got a word to say ag'in' y'all women. You's mighty smart and purty and ev'ything like dat. I don't aim for de men to do y'all's housework so's y'all kin do de menfo'kses' work. I aims for de women to do de housework, 'cause dey ain't stiddy enough in dey minds to do de men's work. You done good, Deborah, whar old Barak was skeered. But all de same, Barak come along and changed yo' mind, 'cause yo' mind ain't stiddy.

"Now you git on back home and cook him a good supper and feed him up. And efn I ever ketches him er gittin' skeered er de Philistines again, well, I'm liable to change things about and put a dress on him!"



Humility of Old King Nebuchadnezzar

WELL, old King Nebuchadnezzar was a sinner, but de Lawd kind er went easy on him, "'Cause he don't know no better, Daniel," say de Lawd. "He was raised up in a town whar hit wan't no church and no nothin' else but sin, so I don't hold dat ag'in' him. But I want you to go over and work on him some. But go easy, 'cause he ain't nobody's fool. He likes to git a bunch er smart people around, makin' jokes and tellin' riddles and goin' on. So you do dat, and ev'y once in a while when he gits too big for his britches me and you'll take him down a peg."

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So Daniel made friends wid King Nebuchadnezzar, and ev'y once in a while he'd git in a lick for de Lawd.

But Nebuchadnezzar was proud! Ev'y once in a while he'd set his crown down over his eye and stick a ten-cent cigar in de cornder of his mouf and say, "Who de smartest man in de worrul?"

And all de folks about de house would say, "Old King Nebuchadnezzar, long may you wave!"

"You's mighty tootin'," say King Nebuchadnezzar. "Who kin do anything anybody else kin do, and den some?"

"Old King Nebuchadnezzar, live a thousand years!" say de fo'ks.

"Say on," say de king. "And who kin do hit better den anybody else in de worrul?"

"Old King Nebuchadnezzar, fawty ways f'm Sunday!"

"Daniel," say King Nebuchadnezzar, "I didn't hyar you jine in de chorus."

"I was watchin' dem boys over yonder by de fyer," say Daniel.

So Nebuchadnezzar looked and he seed three boys standin' by de fyer. "Look like dey ain't got a friend in de worrul," he say. "Who is dey?"

The Humility of Old King Nebuchadnezzar

"Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego," say Daniel.

"No wonder dey ain't got no friends," say de king. "Wid names like dat. I don't blame 'em. Whyn't dey git named Sam er Henry er somethin'?"

"No mind about dem boys," say Daniel. "Dey got friends. I's dey friend and de Lawd is dey friend."

"Friends er yo'n, hunh?" say de king. "Well, whyn't you and dem kind er git up a quartette and sing some for My Majesty? . . . Hey! come on over hyar some, boys, and y'all and Daniel sing."

So dey comed over and harmonized a lick er two and den sung:

"Hebrew chillun in de fyer,
Dey begin to pray.
Lawd come down and put de fyer out,
And hit sho was a mighty day!"

"Whar dem chillun's mammy at?" say King Nebuchadnezzar. "Don't she know better den to let de chillun play in de fyer? Chillun ain't got no business playin' wid de fyer, and efn dey mammy wan't settin' out on de front step, chattering' and goin' on wid de neighbors, she'd 'a'

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never let 'em play in de fyer in de fust place! Whar dem poor burnt chillun's mammy at? Somebody ought to take a stick to dat woman! Lettin' de chillun play in de fyer!"

So Daniel he sot down and told old King Nebuchadnezzar all about de Hebrew chilluns. "Dey's grown up, jest like me and you," say Daniel. "Us calls us de Hebrew chillun, 'cause de Lawd kind er looks after us all de time. When we gits too big for our britches, well, he chastises us, and when we gits proud, he humbles us, and den when we gits in trouble, he he'ps us out."

"So dat's de way, hunh?" say Nebuchadnezzar. "And how do dis Lawd know you's in trouble and need he'pin' out?"

"We gits on our knees and axes him by a prayer," say Daniel.

"Aw-w-w-w!" say Nebuchadnezzar. "Dat's de way, hunh?" So he sot and he chawed on dat awhile, and den he got a idee. "Dat's easy," he say. "I'm gonter."

"Gonter which?" say Daniel.

"Gonter be de Lawd," say Nebuchadnezzar.

"Better mind out, old King Nebuchadnezzar," say Daniel. "Don't git proud. You might be de

The Humility of Old King Nebuchadnezzar

smartest king in de worrul, but you ain't de Lawd; not by a long shot."

"I never seed nobody do nothin' yet," say King Nebuchadnezzar, "dat I couldn't turn around and do hit better. And I bet as quick as I gits my hand in, well, I bet I'm gonter do better den de Lawd."

So he sot his crown down over his eye and tilted his ten-cent cigar in de cornder of his mouf. "Hey, y'all boys wid de funny names," he say, "git down on yo' knees and ax me to do somethin'."

"Nawp," say Shadrach. "We don't git on we knees for nobody but de Lawd, and you ain't de Lawd."

So Nebuchadnezzar turned and wunk at Daniel. "Dat's jest what I wanted 'em to say, Daniel," he say. "Now watch."

So he r'ared back and pulled de crown down again and say: "Y'all boys been standin' 'round dat fyer all mawin'. I'm gonter give you all de fyer you wants. I'm gonter th'ow you in de fyer and see do you like dat."

And den he say to Daniel, "Now watch 'em bend dey knee and beg."

But dey didn't.

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"Th'ow us in dis fyer," say Shadrach, "and hit wouldn't do nothin' but git smoke in we's eyes. Hit ain't doin' a thing but smokin'. Ain't nothin' but a old black-gum log, and no wonder we's so cold!"

"Is dat a fack?" say King Nebuchadnezzar. "Well, hit's a hot fyer down at de sawmill whar dey burnin' pine knots and sawdust under de b'iler. I'll th'ow you in dat."

"Den maybe us'll git warm," say Shadrach.

So ev'ybody went down to de sawmill whar hit was a big fyer goin' and a hund'ed pounds head er steam in de b'iler.

"Now," say old King Nebuchadnezzar, "git down on yo' knees and ax me kindly, or else I'm gonter th'ow you in de fyer."

But whilst he was sayin' dat, Shadrach opened de fyer-box door, and him and Meshach and Abed-nego tuck and stepped into de furnace!

"Hold on dar!" say King Nebuchadnezzar. "Hit's somethin' wrong! Y'all was s'posed to git down and beg me not to put you in de fyer! Hey, Rucker! Git a bucket er water and pour on dat fyer before dem fool boys gits burnt! Come out er dar, y'all crazy fools. Dat fyer'll barbecue you in no time!"

The Humility of Old King Nebuchadnezzar

But whilst Nebuchadnezzar was doin' all er dat tawkin' and goin' on, he looked in de fyer and seed Shadrach and Meshach and Abed-nego—and de Lawd!

"Don't worry about dese boys," say de Lawd. "Dis fyer ain't hot. I done tuck all de heat outn hit. And don't worry about pourin' water on hit, too. Jest watch me." And de Lawd r'ared back and say, "Whoosh!" and he put de fyer out!

"Well, doggone old Miz Mitchell!" say King Nebuchadnezzar. "Dat jest beats de jukes! Put de fyer plum out! And I couldn't 'a' done hit wid a bar'l er water! Is y'all boys burnt?"

"Burnt?" say Shadrach. "Naw, we's cold. We's teeth is chatterin'. Le's git back to dat old gum fyer in de fyerplace. Hit ain't much, but hit's better den dis."

"Well, Daniel," say King Nebuchadnezzar, "dat was all right! *All* right! I couldn't 'a' done hit; I be dog efn I could 'a'!"

"Dat wa'n't nothin' for de Lawd to do," say Daniel. "He could 'a' done hit wid his eyes shet."

"Well, hit was all right," say Nebuchadnezzar. "I couldn't 'a' done hit. I kin do anything anybody else kin, *but* de Lawd, Daniel. De Lawd and den me. I wisht I knowed how he done dat."

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"Hit wouldn't do you no good to learn how to do dat trick, old King Nebuchadnezzar," say Daniel. "De Lawd knows a million tricks more better den dat'n'. Hit'd run you crazy watchin' 'em, let alone tryin' to learn how to do 'em all."

"Well, well!" say Nebuchadnezzar. "De Lawd first, and *den* me!"



Elijah's Chariot Ride

AFTER Ahab had got kilt hit was a boy named Ahaziah which was de king. And he was a wuthless, no-'count, licker-drinkin' man and de Lawd didn't love him. So about de first thing dat he done was to pass a law ag'in' de Lawd's prophets. Hit was ag'in' de law to prophet and hit was ag'in' de law to preach. "And efn I ketches dat old long-whiskered Elijah runnin' 'round town," he say, "I'm gonter fourteen-thirty-six him f'm amazin' grace to a floatin' circumstance!"

So Elijah hyared de news and he struck out for de hills, and quick as he got in de hills he tuck and built him up a fyer.

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"Elijah," say de Lawd, "how come you buildin' a fyer like hit's winter time, and hyar hit is de middle er August?"

"Well, Lawd," say Elijah, "I'm gonter tell you. Ev'y since I done dat fyer trick at old King Ahab's barbecue, well, I been kind er fiddlin' around de fyre. Hit's a heap er stuff about fyer dat don't ev'ybody know. Anybody kin take a match and start a fyer. And hit's dem which got sense enough to take a flint rock and some shavin's and git a blaze goin'. And hyar and dar you kin find a man which know how to make a whirl-a-gig and spin hit to de fyer come. And I kin take de glass outn my speck-tickles and hold hit at de sun jest right, and git a few embers. Well, hit's a heap er stuff about fyer I done learnt, but hit's a heap er stuff I ain't learnt yit, too."

"I didn't set you down hyar to play in de fyer, Elijah," say de Lawd. "Seem like to me I set you down hyar to prophet my word to dese sinners."

"You done dat, Lawd," say Elijah. "But de new king passed a law ag'in' prophetin'. Er cou'se, Lawd, yo' word is better den his law, but all de

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same, hit ain't no p'int in a man gittin' hisse'f in jail, is dey?"

"Nawp," say de Lawd. "Hit'd only git you a hard name to git in jail. But I sho wish you hadn't got started to playin' in de fyer."

"A man," say Elijah, "got to do somethin', and de more I fiddles around de fyer de more I learns about hit."

"Dat's how come I knows so much," say de Lawd. "But matches and flint rocks is enough for mankind to know, so you better be keerful what you learns. Efn you learns too much you'll git dangerous, and den I'll have to snatch you away f'm hyar. Hit don't do for a man to know too much about de fyer."

Well, whilst dat tawk was goin' on dis new king was down in de town, gittin' ready to celebrate 'cause he de new king.

"Dis gonter be a fast jamboree," he say. "I got plenty er wine and plenty er hard-drinkin' licker, and I don't want nobody sober around hyar for long. Now le's git dis jamboree started. Rucker, you take de door offn de hinges and start drummin', and, Ruby, you come and dance wid my good-lookin' Majesty. Drum dat door, Rucker!

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I likes my licker hard and my women fast. Who say I ain't gonter make a good king?"

"Dey'll be sayin' a lie efn dey say," say Ruby, "'cause you's jest de kind er king I wants to king me around."

So dat's de kind er doin's dat was takin' place at de king's house. And de drunker dey got de rowdier dey got, to a long about daylight Rucker rolled out f'm under a table and say: "I wants a drink! Hey, king, whar de licker at? I'm dry."

But de king didn't answer.

"What kind er king is dat?" say Rucker. "Must 'a' passed out! Whar de king at?"

But didn't nobody know.

"I'm goin' home," say Rucker. "I ain't havin' no fun at dis jamboree. I'm goin' whar de licker don't run out so quick." And he staggered outn de door.

But quick as he hit de front porch he stopped. "Uh-uhh!" he say. "Hyar de king, layin' out hyar in de grass! Passed out! Wonder how come he comed out in de yard to pass out?"

"Maybe he out grazin' on de grass," say Ruby. "Old Nebuchadnezzar done hit one time."

Well, ev'ybody swarmed out to see was

Elijah's Chariot Ride

Ahaziah eatin' grass, but about dat time Ahaziah groaned and turned over.

"He ain't drunk," say Rucker; "he's hurt." And he looked all around. "I bet he fell outn dat upstairs window up yonder."

"Well," say Ruby, "I b'lieve I'll be gittin' on home. Good night, all."

So dey toted de king back in de house and put him in de bed. "Us better git a doctor, maybe," say one er de mens.

"And git de tawk started about how de king got drunk and fell outn de window?" say Rucker. "Hit'd give him a hard name. Better us had go to de prophet first and find out how bad he's hurt, and efn he's bad hurt, den we got to git a doctor. But efn he jest stunned, well, we'll let him lay around and cyore hisse'f."

So dey set out up de hillside to whar old Elijah was settin' by de fyer.

"Elijah," say Rucker, "us wants you to prophet some for us."

"Hit's ag'in' de law to prophet," say Elijah, "but I'm gonter tell you hit ain't no good to send for no doctor for dat low-down king. 'Cause when he got pitched outn de window he landed on his haid, and dat turned his liver over."

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"He ain't gonter die, is he, Elijah?" say Rucker.

"Aw, ain't he?" say Elijah. "You jest watch him. Any time a man git his liver turned over, well, he ain't got long to live. And you kin put dat in de jug and bung hit up for Christmas. King Ahaziah's time is mighty nigh out."

So de mens went on back and found Ahaziah hollerin' and beggin' and cussin' and raisin' sand. "Whyn't somebody git me a doctor?" he say. "I'm all onsettled on de insides. I wants a doctor!"

"Doctor ain't gonter do you no good," say Rucker. "Yo' liver is turned over."

"How you know?" say de king.

"Elijah propheted hit," say Rucker.

"Elijah said dat?" say de king. "Don't he know hit's ag'in' de law for him to prophet? And hyar he prophetin' bad ag'in' me! I'm gonter fourteen-thirty-six him for dat! Whyn't y'all arrest him and bring him down to jail?"

"Hit wa'n't but five er us," say Rucker, "and hit was one er him. Whyn't you send de state troops after him?"

"I'm gonter do jest dat," say de king. "Tell de cap'm to git fifty soldiers and arrest him and fourteen-thirty-six him all over de books. Proph-

Elijah's Chariot Ride

etin' out de king! Dangerous and suspicious! Revilin' de po-leece! Fortune-tellin'! Resistin' arrest! Drunk and disorderly! Disturbin' de peace! Totin' a pistol! Loiterin' on de cornders! And efn hits room in de books for any yuther charges, well, write dem down, too."

So de cap'm lined up his soldiers and marched 'em up de hill to whar old Elijah was settin' back, cross-legged, by de fyer.

"Yo' name is Elijah?" say de cap'm.

"Dat's what de Lawd calls me when he wants me to prophet."

"Well, Elijah," say de cap'm, "you propheted ag'in' de king."

"I did," say Elijah.

"No mind," say de cap'm. "Tell dat to de jedge. And when de king git done fourteen-thirty-sixin' you, well, you'll be lucky efn you don't git nothin' but hung."

"Is dem fifty soldiers all you brang up wid you?" say Elijah. "How you expect to git me wid jest fifty men?"

"I'm gonter show you," say de cap'm. And he turned to his mens and say, "Go git him, soldiers!"

But de soldiers didn't, 'cause quick as de cap'm

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said dat, well, old Elijah done somethin'. De book don't say jest what he done, but de word is dat he done somethin' about like dis: He stood up tall and straight and p'inted one hand at de sky and de yuther at de soldiers, and say:

"Fiyer in de teakittle, fiyer in de cup!
Fiyer fall down and burn de soldiers up!"

'And before dem soldiers knowed what was happenin' de fiyer comed down and burnt 'em to cracklin's!

And about de time de fiyer done dat, up stepped de Lawd!

"I knowed you was gettin' too smart wid dat fiyer, Elijah," say de Lawd. "Er cou'se I ain't blamin' you for what you done, 'cause I'd 'a' done de same thing myse'f. But de p'int is hit's ag'in' my plan to have mankind on de yearth knowin' all dat much about fiyer. So I'm gonter call down de chariot and take you home wid me."

"Lemme see kin I, Lawd," say Elijah. And he stood up tall and straight again and waved his hands:

"Fiyer on de axel; fiyer on de hound!
Fiery hosses, haul de chariot down!"

Elijah's Chariot Ride

And down come de fiery chariot!

"Git in wid me, Elijah," say de Lawd. "You's too smart for de yearth. I'm gonter take you up to Glory!"



Throw Down Jezebel

OLD Queen Jezebel was settin' up by de window, watchin' de fo'ks go by, when she hyared de news dat her husband had got kilt in de war.

"Humph!" she say. "Old Ahab been dead a long time, anyhow, and didn't know hit. Now I kin git me a stout, handsome man to king me around."

And she could 'a' done jest dat, too, efn hit wa'n't for but two things. De fust thing was dat de Lawd didn't want her to, and de yuther thing was dat de Lawd wa'n't gonter let her.

But she didn't now what was in de Lawd's mind. All she knowed was dat hit never yet had

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been no man which c'd stand before her when she th'owed dem roguish eyes on him and give him a good-lookin' "Hy-dy."

"'Cause I'm a stinger-ree woman," she say. "Dey calls me Jezebel, but my workin' name is Poor Selma! De mens don't like me, maybe, but dey can't leave me alone! I'm a bad habit and I can't be quit! Efn I ain't made outn cocaine, well, how come de mens wawkin' around, singin' dis song:

"Jest a little Jezebel,
Jest a little sin.
Know hit's gonter kill me,
But I don't know when!

"And dey don't keer when, too," she say. "'Cause my name is Poor Selma, Stinger-ree Cocaine Jezebel, and I ain't got a shame in de worrul!" And she got up and done a sin dance right in front er de window!

But de Lawd had his mind sot on puttin' a stop to her devilment. So all de time old King Ahab was gittin' kilt in de war, de Lawd was lookin' round to find de handsomest, stoutest man in de fightin'.

"Yo' name is Jehu, ain't hit?" say de Lawd.

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"Yas, thanky, Lawd," say Jehu.

"I got some business wid you," say de Lawd.
"I want you to git to town ——"

"But, Lawd," say Jehu, "I got to git back to my crop. Grass is knee high in my cotton ——"

"No mind dat," say de Lawd, "I'll blight dat grass. Git in de buggy and drive straight up to old Queen Jezebel's house ——"

"Uh-uhh, Lawd!" say Jehu. "I'm a married man. Hit's a heap er single mens around hyar, and I told Della I'd come home quick as de fightin' was done."

"I knows all about dat," say de Lawd. "How's Della gittin' along?"

"Sweet and sassy as kin be," say Jehu.

"Umhum," say de Lawd. "How old is she?"

"She'll make about twenty dis fall, I reckon," say Jehu, "and jest as purty and fat and slick ——"

"She still a member er my church, ain't she?"

"She is, Lawd," say Jehu. "Dat gal ain't never done a lick er sin."

"Well," say de Lawd, "dat's jest how come I picked you out. Ev'y time you think er Della, you think about how young and fat she is, and how good a member she is. Now you go git in

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yo' buggy and shine up de harness and take a meatskin and slick up you' hawse's hoofs, and go drivin' up to Jezebel's house jest like you used to go drivin' up to Della's house when you was courtin' her, and den see what happen."

"Lawd, you know what gonter happen when a big man like me gits around dat Jezebel woman ——"

"Go on," say de Lawd. "You do jest like I told you, you hyar? Go swarmin' up dar and tell her she ain't got no more husband den a jack rabbit. Now git!"

Well, Jehu come swarmin' up in style, and Jezebel was leanin' out de window, watchin' de fo'ks go by. So when she seed Jehu she kind er purtied up her face and say, "Hey, big'n', whar you gwine wid dat high-steppin' hawse and buggy like you don't keer who likes hit?"

"Who, me?" say Jehu. "I'm goin' to yo' house, old Queen Jezebel."

"Dat's de way wid y'all handsome mens," she say. "Y'all jest vexes a poor queen to she don't know her mind. Come on in de house, den, and rest yo' good-lookin' se'f, and git dat weary look offn yo' face. You look like you knows some sad news."

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"I does," say Jehu. "Yo' husband done got kilt in de fightin'."

"Is dat a fack?" say Jezebel. "I hyared dat myse'f, but I didn't think I was dat lucky."

"You ain't sorry, den?" say Jehu.

"Humph!" say Jezebel. "What you think I been makin' him spend all his money on life insurance efn I'm sorry he got kilt? I been tired er old Ahab for so long —— Say, big'n', you's about my style. Soon as I seed you come drivin' up in dat hawse and buggy, I says to myse'f, I says: 'Yonder is de kind er man I wants to king me around. Now efn old Ahab would haul off and git hisse'f kilt, me and dat handsome scound'el yonder c'd take de life insurance ——"

"No mind dat tawk," say Jehu. "De Lawd sont me to tell you yo' husband is kilt, and I done told you. So hand me my hat."

"Aw, old hawse-drivin' man," say Jezebel, "don't go run off jest quick as us gits to likin' each other. Hyar I'm de queen widout no king to king me around, and hyar is you wid dat hawse and buggy. O' couse hit's dem which would like to king me; but hit ain't ev'ybody I'd let. But dat's de way wid y'all mens. You jest changes a por gal's mind and den quits her for some yuther

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woman." And she whimpered a lick er two like she cryin'.

"Aw, hit ain't no use in doin' like dat, baby," say Jehu. "De Lawd sont me, or else I wouldn't 'a' come."

"Yeah, you would, too," say Jezebel. "You jest come hyar to plague me and den run off."

"Aw, sugar," say Jehu, "don't go tawkin' like dat. I ain't gone yit, is I? I'm still settin' hyar."

"Yeah, but you's fixin' to," say Jezebel.

"Maybe I's jest fixin' to see do you want me to stay," say Jehu.

So dey sot and tawked about de fust one thing and den de yuther, to finally Jezebel up and allowed hit was kind er lonesome, settin' on de sofa all by herse'f and why didn't Jehu come over and keep her some company: "Come on and set by me, big old hawse-drivin' man," she say. "Della won't never know de diffunce."

And right dar was whar old Queen Jezebel put her foot in her mouf, 'cause quick as she named Della, right dar was whar de Lawd's plan started to workin', 'cause dat called Della to Jehu's mind, and gittin' her on his mind, he remembered what de Lawd had axed him about how old was she and was she a sinner.

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"Naw," say Jehu, "I ain't gonter set on no sofa wid you, old Queen Jezebel. Do I want to set on de sofa wid somebody, well, I kin go set on de sofa wid a twenty-year-old gal dat's as good-lookin' as you is, and I bet you's fawty!"

"Yeah?" say Jezebel. "Fawty don't make me a old woman, son."

"Naw?" say Jehu. "Maybe not. But you's a fast-livin' sinner, too. Fawty might not make you old, and sin might not slow you down. But, gal, hit ain't no woman yit which kin handle sin and fawty, too! Sin and fawty done put you in de cornder, old Queen Jezebel. You's done. You might think you's de Poor Selma in dis town, but sin and fawty done made a old, old woman outn you. Dey say you's a bad habit among de men, but I kin quit you like I was quittin' work. You's done, grandma: sin and fawty. Now git you a wawkin'-stick and a corncob pipe and go to grumblin' to yo'se'f. You might er handled sin, and you might er handled fawty years, but sin and fawty bofe done set you ag'in' de chimney jam'. Git a rag tied around yo' head and set and tell me and de yuther young'ns how dey used to do things back before de war!"

When Jezebel hyared dat she got mad and

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started to cussin', and de more she cussed de more Jehu laid her in de dozens. So finally when she seed her cussin' wan't gittin' her nowhar, she started to cryin' and beggin'.

"Don't say dat, Jehu," she say. "Don't tawk me out, right to my face. Man, how kin you treat me so mean? I wouldn't tawk to a dog like dat!"

"Ain't hit de trufe?" say Jehu. "I ain't lyin' on you, am I?"

"Trufe or lyin'," say Jezebel, "hit ain't no use in hard-tawkin' and abusin' me like dat."

"I ain't hard-tawkin'," say Jehu. "I'm jest tellin' you what de Lawd knows. Sin and fawty done hauled yo' ashes for de last time, old woman, and dat's a fack!"

"Well," say Jezebel, "I ain't never been abused and hard-tawked by a man yit, and I'm too old to start in now." So she jumped out de window and broke her neck. "Now I'm dead," she say, "and I know ain't nobody gonter hard-tawk and abuse de dead."

"You's right about dat," say Jehu, "but efn you wa'n't dead, I'd be tawkin' about you yit, you old strumpet!"



Naboth's Vineyard

ANY time you see a gal buyin' herse'f fancy dresses and makin' out like she's havin' a good time, well, jest set her down for a heavy-hearted sinner. And any time you see a man spendin' his money on a woman or shootin' dice or cuttin' up noisy, write him down for a sad sinner, too.

'Cause dat's one way de Lawd is got er gittin' back on de sinners. De Lawd made mankind like dat. Mankind kin go out and sin and cut up as much as he wants to, but he don't git nowhars. De fust thing mankind got to do to have a good time is git right wid de Lawd, and efn he ain't

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right wid de Lawd, well, all dis fancy stuff ain't gittin' him nowhars.

Dat was jest what de matter was wid old King Ahab and Queen Jezebel away back yonder in de olden times. King Ahab was de king and Jezebel was de queen, but dey wa'n't happy. Ahab had plenty er money and Jezebel knowed how to spend hit. But dey wa'n't right wid de Lawd and dey didn't have 'em no good time. Dey was shameless sinners and dey was sad sinners. De shamelesser dey got de sadder dey got, and de sadder dey got de shamelesser dey got. Dey got so low down in sin dat even de blind man on de cornder made up a song about 'em which say:

Ahab like his whisky,
Jezebel like her gin;
Ahab like his outside women,
Jezebel like her outside men.

And dat was de natchal trufe about 'em, dey was dat low down. But hit didn't git 'em no-whars. All de time Jezebel would be sayin': "Buy me a dress, darlin'. Gimme a pair er shoes, King Ahab. Buy me dat ring so I kin wear hit and look purty for you."

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And Ahab he'd buy hit. " 'Cause I can't stand to see a good-lookin' woman wantin' somethin'. Hyar, baby, take my purse and buy anything you wants. And efn they's any money left, th'ow hit away, 'cause my credik is so good."

Well, de more stuff Jezebel bought, de more money Ahab gave her. And de more money Ahab gave her de more stuff she bought. And all de time bofe of 'em was sinkin' deeper in sin, and gittin' de down-yonders so bad to dey couldn't hardly see. All dey c'd do was set around and sing:

"Wanted to laugh, but I broke right down and cried.
Don't want nothin'; jest can't be satisfied."

"I'm gittin' tired er buyin' clothes and stuff, Ahab," say Jezebel.

"Don't tell me yo' troubles, gal," say Ahab. "I'm gittin' tired er buyin' 'em for you, too. I don't mind de money, but I mighty nigh wore out my pants pocket, reachin' for my purse."

"I wants me a vineyard, old King Ahab," say Jezebel.

"A which?" say Ahab.

"A vineyard."

Naboth's Vineyard

"What's dat?" say Ahab.

"I don't know," say Jezebel. "But hit's a man name Naboth which is got one. I seed him at de store yistiddy, happy and whistlin' like hit ain't a weary in de world. So I axed him how come, and he say hit's 'cause he got de best vineyard in de county. He had patches on his pants and was barefooted and nappy-headed, but he sho was havin' a heap er fun about hit."

"Well," say Ahab, "I buyed you dresses and stuff, ev'y time you axed for 'em, so I don't see how come I can't buy you a vineyard, too. Whar you gonter put hit?"

"Put what?" say Jezebel.

"De vineyard," say Ahab.

"I don't know," say Jezebel. "Is hit something you put somewhar, or don't you wear hit?"

"I don't know," say Ahab. "You might wear hit, or you might eat hit, or you might set hit on de parlor table. Hit's all de same to me. Efn you wants one you gonter have hit. And efn you don't like de taste, you kin feed hit to de hawgs. Whar at do Naboth live?"

So Ahab went out and found old Naboth workin' in de gyarden among de grape vines.

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"Yo' name is Naboth?" he say.

"Dat's what dey calls me at dinner time," say Naboth. "And yo's is King Ahab?"

"Pleased to meet you," say Ahab. So dey passed de time er day and tawked about dis and de yuther, to finally Ahab broached de tawk about de vineyard.

"I hyars you got yo'se'f a vineyard, Naboth," say Ahab.

"Yo' hyarin' is good, old King Ahab," say Naboth.

"How much you take for hit?" say Ahab.

"Hit ain't for sale," say Naboth.

"I know hit ain't for sale," say Ahab. "But I mean how much money will you take for hit?"

"I won't sell," say Naboth.

"I know dat, too," say Ahab. "But I'm tawkin' about spot cash money. Greenbacks, wid maybe a yaller-back scattered hyar and yonder."

"I don't need no money, old King Ahab," say Naboth. "I don't need nothin' but dis vineyard, and dat's what I got and dat's what I'm gonter keep. So long. See you some time again."

"A hund'ed dollars?" say Ahab.

"Not a hund'ed million," say Naboth. "'Cause

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all er dat money won't do me no good, and dis vineyard do. See you again, Ahab. So long."

So Ahab went on back home.

"Whar my vineyard, old King Ahab?" say Jezebel. "Which pocket is hit in? Don't tell me. Lemme see kin I find hit."

"You ain't gonter find hit, baby," say Ahab. "'Cause I didn't buy hit. Naboth say he ain't sellin' hit for no price to nobody."

"Aw, I bet you's tryin' to s'prise me," say Jezebel. "Waitin' to my birthday, or somethin'. Come on, daddy, gimme my vineyard."

"Nawp," say Ahab. "Naboth won't sell. He done made up his mind."

So Jezebel whimpered and squalled about de house, beggin' for dat vineyard. "Efn you was a man," she say, "you'd go git me dat vineyard."

"Baby, I'm a man," say Ahab, "but dat boy won't sell de vineyard."

"Well," say Jezebel, "hit's a heap er ways er gittin' a vineyard widout buyin' hit. Efn I had me a vineyard and some big, bad scound'el wid a gun come and th'owed de gun in my face, well, I'd give him de vineyard to git shut of him."

"Baby, us already got a hard name in de town,"

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say Ahab, "but efn you got yo' mind sot on dat vineyard, well, I'll go git hit for you."

So dat night Ahab tuck his durringer and went over and picked a argyment wid Naboth. And de first thing Naboth knowed, Ahab had done shot him!

"I ain't argyin' now, Naboth," say Ahab. "I'm tellin' you. I tried to buy dat vineyard, fair and square, and you wouldn't sell hit. Now I'm gonter take hit. Tell me whar hit is and tell me fast, or I'll shoot you again."

"You kin have dat vineyard, Ahab," say Naboth, "'cause I ain't gonter live to work in hit no more."

"Work?" say Ahab. "You got to work in a vineyard?"

"You mighty whoopin' you is, fool," say Naboth. "A vineyard ain't nothin' but a patch er grape vines, and you sho' got to hump yo'se'f to keep de weeds and grass trimmed down. Not to mention keepin' out de sparrows and de crows which eats up all de grapes. I say, is you got to work a vineyard?"

"Don't tell me no more," say Ahab, "I got a grape-vine patch at home which keeps me worked down to a shadder."

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So Ahab went on back to Jezebel, powerful low down and sad. "Well, I got dat vineyard for you," he say.

"You needn't to troubled, Ahab," say Jezebel. "I don't speck I want no vineyard. I speck I'd druther have a pair er year bobs or somethin'."

